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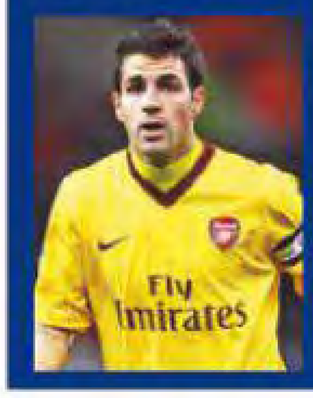


Football's most wanted players... who's going, who's staying

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Everything you need to know for Wembley's big showdown

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How Lille went a long way

**PLUS**
- Robert Prosinecki
- Milan 1989
- FIFA election
- Raul

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June 2011

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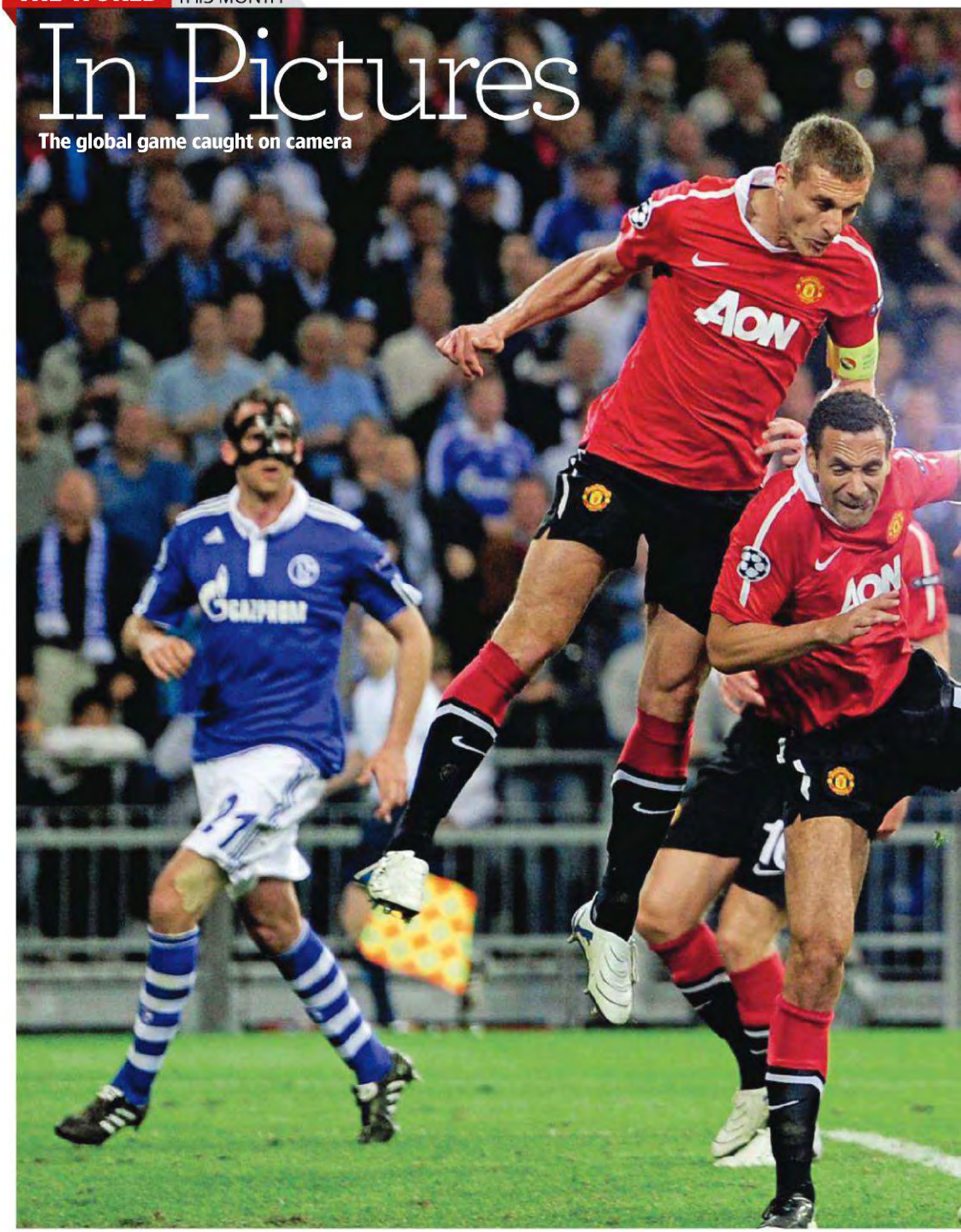
# In Pictures

**The global game caught on camera**



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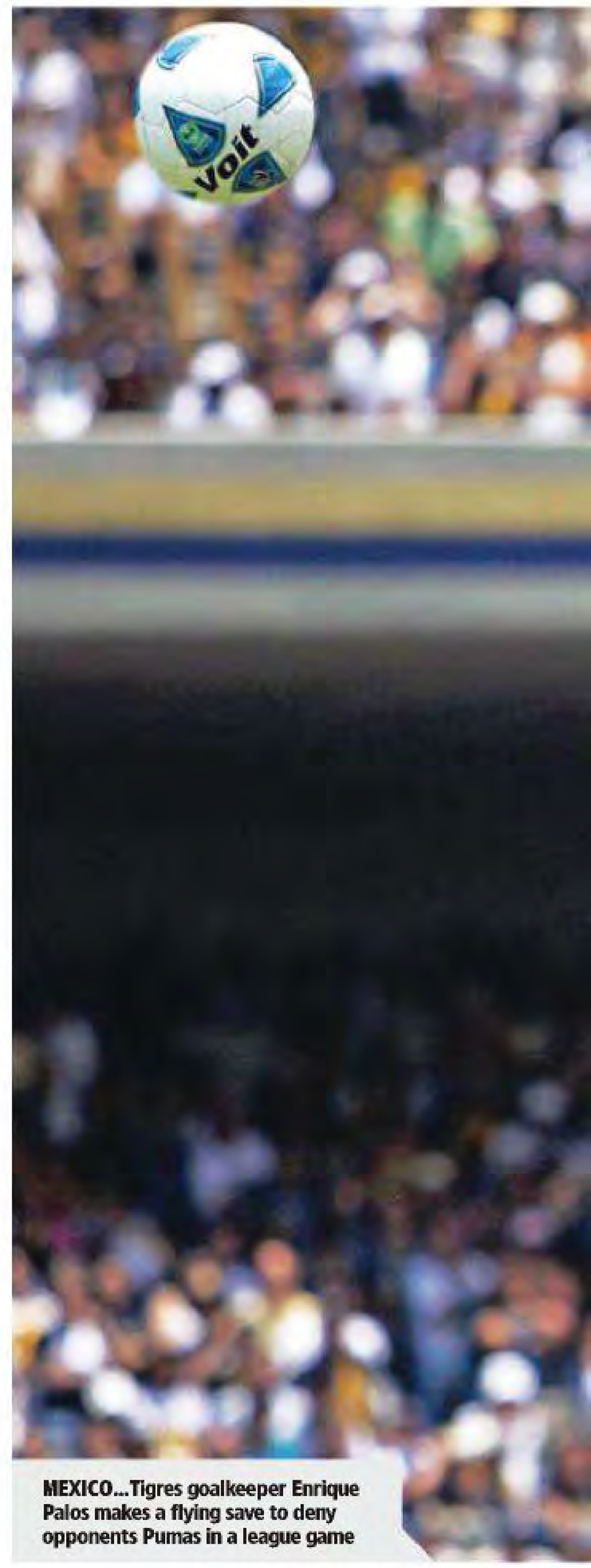
**GERMANY...Manchester United defender Nemanja Vidic clears under pressure from Joel Matip of Schalke in the clubs' Champions League semi-final, first-leg encounter in Gelsenkirchen**

BRAZIL...Fabio Rochemback of Gremio takes the full force of Tomas Costa's left boot in a Libertadores Cup tie against Universidad Catolica

ITALY...Napoli striker Ezequiel Lavezzi reacts after missing a scoring chance in the 2-1 home defeat to Udinese

SWITZERLAND...Neuchatel Xamax's Marcos Gelabert disagrees with the decision of referee Ludovic Gremaud to award a goal to Basle




MEXICO...Tigres goalkeeper Enrique Palos makes a flying save to deny opponents Pumas in a league game

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EGYPT...a Zamalek fan lights flares during his club's African Champions League tie with Tunisia's Club Africain, which was abandoned when hundreds of supporters invaded the pitch

SPAIN...Lionel Messi celebrates after scoring against Real Madrid, in the third of four *clasicos* in 18 days, to give Barcelona a 2-0 win in the Champions League semi-final first leg

# FROM THE EDITOR

A player who divides opinion like no other, Zlatan Ibrahimovic is our cover star this month. No matter what you think of the Swede as an individual, his personal list of honours is without equal in the modern game. Nine titles in 10 years with five different clubs is an astonishing record and his achievements deserve to be recognised.

Elsewhere in this issue, we preview the Champions League Final at Wembley. We also prepare for the FIFA presidential election, though it is hard to make any predictions ahead of the vote in Zurich on June 1. The example of Bahrain suggests both Sepp Blatter and Mohamed Bin Hammam are prepared to turn a blind eye to injustice in their search for votes.

> Some brave federations will abstain in protest... FIFA, with its feudal voting system, will carry on regardless

Some brave federations – including, we hope, the English Football Association – will abstain in protest at the lack of credible candidates. Most, however, will be content to pocket the development cash in return for their votes. FIFA, with its feudal voting system, will muddle on regardless.

We'll have the full story of the election next month, along with a comprehensive review of the European season and an extensive preview of the 2011 Copa America in Argentina.

**Gavin Hamilton, Editor**

## 10 SIGNIFICANT EVENTS THIS MONTH


1. Barcelona and Real Madrid went to war in four *Clasicos* ➤ Page 88
2. Raul nets a new European goalscoring record as Schalke exceed everyone's expectations in the Champions League ➤ Page 12
3. French federation hit by racism row ➤ Page 34
4. Bahrain players' plight ignored by FIFA's presidential candidates ➤ Page 30
5. Portuguese clubs achieve unprecedented success in Europa League ➤ Page 33
6. Milan close in on Serie A title ➤ Page 36
7. Lille lead the way in France ➤ Page 58
8. Louis Van Gaal sacked by Bayern Munich ➤ Page 37
9. Argentinian clubs suffer in Libertadores group stages ➤ Page 86
10. Mexico's Monterrey beat Real Salt Lake to win the CONCACAF Champions League Final ➤ Page 87




ENGLAND

## Kroenke takes control of Arsenal

Safe custodian...Kroenke

Arsenal have become the latest club to be owned by foreign directors after American businessman Stan Kroenke took control of the club following the purchase of a 16 per cent stake from the late Danny Fiszman.

Arsenal chairman Peter Hill-Wood, who had previously said that he did not want Kroenke's "sort" at the club, welcomed the development.

"Mr Kroenke, although relatively new to Arsenal, has shown himself to be a man who values and respects the history and traditions of this very special club that we cherish. We are confident that he will be a safe custodian of its future."

Kroenke is the latest foreign owner to take control of a major European club. In Italy, a consortium headed by American Thomas DiBenedetto is close to completing its purchase of Roma, while, in Spain, Getafe were on the brink of agreeing a deal with the Dubai-based Royal Emirates Group. However, the group's chairman, Sheikh Butti bin Suhail Al Maktoum, denied that the club would be re-named Getafe Team Dubai.

ENGLAND

## Fears for Houllier's future

Gerard Houllier may have taken charge of his last game as manager of Aston Villa after being hospitalised with chest pains and replaced by his assistant, Gary McAllister, until the end of the season.

Houllier, 63, who underwent 11 hours of open-heart surgery in 2001 while manager of Liverpool, said he had been given the all-clear by his heart surgeon before taking the Villa job.

In hospital...Houllier



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"Inter organised the perfect of suicides"

**Turin's *Tuttosport* describes Internazionale's 5-2 home drubbing by Schalke in the Champions League**

"We're suffering with a nasty cold, but there's medicine out there to cure it"

**Spanish clubs are in the red to the tune of £3.4billion, but Liga chief Jose Luis Astiazaran refuses to read the last rites**

New move...Cannavaro

ITALY

# Cannavaro contemplates political career

Former Italy captain Fabio Cannavaro is preparing for life after football with a move into regional politics. However, the 2006 World Player of the Year has ruffled feathers with his choice of team.

Cannavaro, 37, was contacted by Gianni Lettieri, a mayoral candidate in the Naples elections which take place this spring, and was asked to be his Assessor of Sport.

A proud Neapolitan, Cannavaro said he'd do anything to get youngsters playing more sport.

"I share your projects for the rebirth of Naples," said the ex-Real Madrid and Juventus defender, who added he wouldn't assume the role full-time until his contract with Dubai club Al Ahli expires next year. "I have always dreamed of helping my city."

But the locals aren't entirely enthused. Lettieri is the candidate of PdL, the party formed from Silvio Berlusconi's defunct Forza Italia and extremist groups from northern Italy. Several of the PdL factions are despised in Naples for their hardline attitude towards the south.

Some regard the venture as a publicity stunt and in one regional newspaper an unimpressed reader wrote a letter asking: "What will Cannavaro assess? Footballs?"

After facing and beating the world's best footballers in the 2006 World Cup, Cannavaro must now tackle cynicism from his own people.

***Sheridan Bird***

# HEROES & VILLAINS

## YAYA TOURE

Scored the goal that took Manchester City to their first FA Cup Final for 30 years in an outstanding personal performance in the all-Manchester semi-final showdown at Wembley Stadium.

## GONZALO HIGUAIN

Scored a hat-trick on his first full game back for Real Madrid after injury in the 6-3 win away to Valencia.

## GRAHAM ALEXANDER

The 39-year-old made his 1,000th appearance in English football as Burnley beat Swansea City 2-1 in the Championship.

## SAMIR HANDANOVIC

The Udinese goalkeeper has saved five of the seven penalties he has faced for the Italian side this season.

## NEYMAR

The Brazilian wonderkid was sent off for his club Santos after receiving a second yellow card for celebrating his goal against Colo Colo in the Libertadores Cup by putting on a face mask of himself that he borrowed from someone in the crowd.

## EMMANUEL OKWI

A missed penalty in the last game of the season denied him a hat-trick and cost his side, Simba, the Tanzanian league title on goal difference.

## SERGIO RAMOS

For dropping the Spanish Cup under the Real Madrid bus on the celebration tour of Madrid, the night after they defeated Barcelona 1-0 in the Final.

## LUIS MORENO

Having been banned for two games in February for kicking an owl – the mascot of opponents Junior Barranquilla – the Deportivo Pereira defender has now been suspended for seven games after kicking an opponent who was lying on the floor.

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"If you don't score in Turkey, you're dead. Before every game I'd ring my mum and say 'I'm calling now as I'm not sure I'll be alive after the final whistle'"

**Former Besiktas striker turned Turkish reality-TV king Pascal Nouma**

## REPORTS

we couldn't make up

**1** Mafia boss Salvatore Lo Russo has claimed that the Golden Ball awarded to Diego Maradona as the best player of the 1986 World Cup was melted down for gold bars after Maradona exchanged it with him for cocaine during his time at Napoli.

"I wanted to give it back to him, but before I could it was melted down into bars," said Lo Russo, who is awaiting trial on drugs trafficking charges.

"I did give him back four watches that were stolen...but one of them was not his so he gave it back to me."

**2** Penarol fans hoped to make it into the *Guinness Book of Records* when they unfurled a flag, in their yellow-and-black colours, measuring 15,000 square metres, which covered almost two stands of the Centenario stadium in Montevideo before their Libertadores Cup match with Independiente.

The flag took four months to make, cost more than £20,000, weighed 1,880kg and was carried from the Penarol club HQ to the Centenario stadium by more than 300 fans.

**3** Partizan Belgrade coach Aleksandar Stanojevic was forced to hand over the keys to his company car after losing a bet with striker Prince Tagoe.

Stanojevic promised Tagoe the car if the 24-year-old scored twice in their Serbian Cup semi-final against arch-rivals Red Star. The Ghana international duly scored both goals in Partizan's 2-0 victory and Stanojevic gave him the keys after the game.

INDIA

# Houghton quits as national boss

Englishman Bobby Houghton has resigned as coach of India after five years in the job.

Houghton, who enjoyed success with Malmo in the 1970s and was previously in charge of Uzbekistan and China, guided the team to two Nehru Cup victories in 2007 and 2009. He also coached the side at the 2011 Asian Cup in Doha – India's first appearance in 27 years – but they lost all three of their group matches.

Houghton had been under contract until 2013 but was recently accused of racism by a fourth official during a friendly against Yemen.

"The racism charges were dropped because of lack of any video or audio evidence. Both parties parted ways mutually," said Indian federation director Tathagata Mukherjee.

Moving on...Houghton

## WINNERS

**COPENHAGEN**
The club from the capital clinched a ninth Danish Superliga title.

**SCOTT PARKER**
The West Ham United midfielder was voted Footballer of the Year by the English Football Writers Association

**PORTO**
Won the Portuguese league at a canter and became only the second team, after Benfica in 1972-73, to clinch the championship without losing a single game.

## LOSERS

**ARLES**
The club from Avignon were relegated after one troubled season in Ligue 1 in France.

**LOUIS VAN GAAL**
Sacked by Bayern Munich after initially being told he would go at the end of the season.

**INDEPENDIENTE**
The record seven-times winners of the Libertadores Cup finished third in their group and failed to qualify for the knockout stage.

Eric Cantona

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"Tomorrow's challenge, the challenge for everybody, is a simple one: we have to make national-team competitions attractive again"

**Re-elected UEFA president Michel Platini signals his intention to put an end to football's "club first" syndrome**

GERMANY

# Raul makes history with new European scoring record

If there is one lesson to be taken from the 2010-11 season it is this: never write off Raul Gonzalez Blanco. The people of Gelsenkirchen have been witness to that.

When the 33-year-old left Real Madrid last summer, 16 years after making his debut, he remained true to his promise not to move to another club in Spain. But he sprang a major surprise by opting for a move to Schalke, in the heart of Germany's Ruhr valley.

The AufSchalke Arena, though preparing to host Champions League football, seemed an unlikely place for the former Spain international to add to his impressive list of honours. But Raul was determined to silence the doubters.

"I came to Germany to see if I could make it in another country, another sporting environment," he admits. "That was my challenge and I think I've done myself justice. After 18 years at Real I wanted to break out of a certain routine, try something new and prove I still have a lot to offer."

And so it has proved, with Raul playing a key role in Schalke's two cup runs: in the Champions League and the German Cup, where they face second division Duisburg in the Final.

"In terms of the Champions League, things have gone far better than we could have possibly hoped," he says. "Winning our first-phase group and then knocking out Valencia and Inter was absolutely sensational. We've succeeded in making people all over Europe talk about Schalke in a good way. That is a plus whichever way you look at it.

"On the other hand, in the Bundesliga we haven't been nearly as consistent as we should. It's a big regret. A mid-table spot does not tally with the playing potential here."

In the knockout stages of the Champions League, his goals against Valencia and Internazionale took his European tally to 72, a new record.

"I've scored goals in decent quantities in both Europe and the Bundesliga. Strikers like me are usually only judged by our numbers and mine have been good," he admits. "Real is the team of my heart, more or less my whole life as a professional and winning three Champions Leagues with them were moments of intense joy and satisfaction.

**Cup run...Raul is enjoying a new lease of life with Schalke**

"I had thought I would struggle ever to have the same feelings. But Schalke's 5-2 win at Inter, for example, was like rerunning an old film. A time to be really proud and excited."

He has a year remaining on his two-year deal, although there is already talk of extending his contract. He is keen to pass on his experience to the younger members of the Schalke squad.

"I do see it as part of my job to guide the youngsters and point them in the right direction," he adds.

"If I can share some of my many experiences in the game, so much the better."

Raul is certain as to the key to his surprise success at Schalke: "Not living in the past. Putting Real to one side. Making the most of this new adventure."

The people of Gelsenkirchen will say amen to that.

***John Holmesdale***



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"When I speak with guys at Schalke, at last they can speak their mind"

**Ex-striker Youri Mulder on his old club since the sacking of Felix Magath**

HOLLAND

## Resignations pave the way for return of Cruyff to Ajax

Demigod...Cruyff

Speculation is mounting that Johan Cruyff could be appointed to a key position at Ajax this summer following the resignation of club directors Uri Coronel and Rik Van den Boog.

Van den Boog, who is the club chief executive, and Coronel, the chairman, will stand aside at the end of the season, having failed to agree with Cruyff's proposals for change.

"We have taken this decision in the interests of the club," says Coronel. "Johan Cruyff is not just anyone. He's a demigod here...or maybe a whole god."

Cruyff, the club's greatest player, who also coached Ajax from 1985 to 1988, has attacked the club's youth system for its failure to produce quality players in recent years. He would like to see a greater role for current coach Frank De Boer, as well as former players Wim Jonk and Dennis Bergkamp.

The remaining board members favour Cruyff's proposals and could now offer him an official position within the club.

However, it remains to be seen whether Cruyff would be prepared to relocate from his base in Barcelona.

# Jim HOLDEN

AT THE HEART OF THE GAME

## Wenger's selfishness is a major problem for club and country

Arsene Wenger is one of the finest managers of the modern age, a man whose unwavering dedication to creating stylish teams for Arsenal is worthy of fierce admiration. It is far easier to win trophies by negative play – "parking the bus", as it is called in the 21st-century idiom – than to rely on slick passing and a ceaseless desire to attack.

There is nobility to his method, even though his refusal to buy a world-class goalkeeper for the past two years has led directly to a failure to win the silverware that the play of his young Gunners team has probably merited.

Where Wenger is anything but noble, however, is in his selfish and crass attitude to the prospect of Arsenal's Jack Wilshere playing for England in this summer's European Under-21 Championship.

Wilshere is keen to take part, believing that international-tournament experience will be good for his career, but Wenger has resorted to virtual sporting blackmail in an effort to prevent him taking part.

The manager claims that playing in the two-week event (a maximum of five matches) would lead to burn-out for the 19-year-old midfielder. So, while he cannot prevent Wilshere from going to the tournament, Wenger has said he will force the player to have a long holiday afterwards, which would make him a late starter in the new season and leave him unready for England's Euro 2012 qualifiers in September.

"If the Under-21s go to the end of their tournament I will have to give four-to-six-weeks holiday to the player," said Wenger. "That means he might not be available for the Euro qualifier against Bulgaria. This is a calculation for England to make."

Actually, it is nothing of the sort. It is a staggering and outrageous suggestion from the Arsenal manager. He is trying to give England an ultimatum that simply does not exist in any sane view of the football world.

Look at the contrast with the policy of Barcelona. Many months ago they made a decision to allow Sergio Busquets to play in the tournament if he so wishes. Busquets, a World Cup winner, has featured in many more club matches than Wilshere.

England's first fixture is against Spain on June 12. How could Busquets be playing and Wilshere not?

The culture in Spain, and other major nations like Germany and France, has always been to participate in these junior events with serious intent. That's why Busquets may play. That's why Mesut Ozil and others starred in the 2009 Euro Under-21s, a tournament they won, and then played so brilliantly in the 2010 World Cup.

This summer there are two significant junior championships: the Euro Under-21s and the World Under-20 tournament, in Colombia in late July/early August.

I would argue that Wilshere would gain even more from travelling to the World Under-20s, a competition that in recent times has been graced by Lionel Messi, Xavi, Andres Iniesta, Ronaldinho, Maicon and Arjen Robben among many others.

The English FA, though, has decided to make the Euro Under-21s a priority – partly because it is a shorter event, but also because it does not directly clash with Premier League games.

> Arsene Wenger has resorted to virtual sporting blackmail over Jack Wilshere

Right or wrong, that is their compromise.

Elite clubs like Arsenal, and mighty managers like Wenger, must make their own compromise and look beyond narrow self-interest to the wider panorama of the game.

England's World Cup record since 1966 is woeful and long-term disdain for junior international tournaments is one of the most significant reasons.

It looks as if Wilshere, already a seriously good footballer, understands this bitter truth. He wants to follow the path of Ozil and Messi, and experience the joy of winning an international junior event. He wants to follow the path of Iniesta and Robben and play in a World Cup Final.

Is that such an unreasonable expectation for a young English player? WS



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"I'm sick of hearing how we are totally dependent on Ibrahimovic. When he was twice suspended, we still got the job done. Milan is not a Swedish megastar and 10 others"

**Milan's Ghana international midfielder Kevin-Prince Boateng**

GERMANY

# Prison sentences in European match-fixing scandal

Three members of a football betting ring have been given prison terms for their involvement in what officials have described as Europe's biggest match-fixing scandal.

The defendants admitted to betting on matches which had allegedly been fixed, and to have bribed players. They were charged in relation to 18 games up to Europa League level.

The longest sentence, of three years and 11 months, was handed to a betting-shop operator identified by the court only as Stevan R. A gambler identified as Tuna A received a three-years-and-eight-months sentence, while another shop operator was sentenced to three years.

Both betting-shop operators developed contacts with football players who became clients.

"Manipulative relationships developed later from these contacts," Judge Carsten Schwadrat said. It was not established beyond reasonable doubt whether matches were actually manipulated, nor if players who accepted money were influenced by the payments.

According to the verdict, all three defendants were involved in the scheme for years.

Seven more defendants are waiting to be sentenced, including Ante Sapina, convicted as the mastermind of a match-fixing ring in Germany in 2005 and sentenced to 35 months in prison.

He was released early and told the court he resumed betting large sums on manipulated games shortly after the 2006 World Cup in Germany.

Sapina's sentence is expected in the first half of May.

The Bochum prosecutor said almost 300 suspects still need to be investigated and further charges are expected.

## GOALS we'd like to see again

To see clips of these goals, visit **www.worldsoccer.com**

**1 THEO JANSSEN**
**TWENTE v PSV**
Runs half the length of the pitch before delicately chipping the keeper.

**2 DEJAN STANKOVIC**
**INTERNAZIONALE v SCHALKE**
As keeper Manuel Neuer heads the ball away, Stankovic volleys it back first time from the halfway line. The ball crosses the goal line without bouncing.

**3 JUNINHO**
**AL GHARAFA v AL SADD**
A free-kick by the Brazilian which is even better than last month's entry – and from a more acute angle.

**4 DIEGO MARTINONES**
**BLOOMING v DESTROYERS**
Flicks the ball over the defender's head before turning through 360 degrees and volleying home.

**5 PA MODOU KAH**
**RODA v VENLO**
A tremendous volley on the turn into the top corner.

**6 LUIS GUILHERME**
**BRAZIL UNDER-17S v ARGENTINA UNDER-17S**
A neat team build-up is finished with the youngster's chest trap and volley from the edge of the penalty area.

RUSSIA

# Kuranyi is Russian football's top earner

German striker Kevin Kuranyi was revealed as the highest-paid player in the Russian league, earning €5.7million (£5.04m) annually, substantially more than the next best-paid players, Danny of Zenit St Petersburg on €3.4m (£3.01m) and Andriy Voronin of Dynamo Moscow on €3m (£2.6m).

Cashing in... Kuranyi

Sport-Egg.com



"My time at Barca is coming to an end"

**Barcelona coach Pep Guardiola makes an earth-shattering declaration to Italian TV, only to later back-pedal**

## OBITUARIES

**Olubayo Adefemi** (1985-2011)
Skoda Xanthi's Nigeria defender died in a car crash in the Kavala region of northern Greece. Capped three times by his country, he was on his way to finalise details of his forthcoming wedding when the accident happened.

**Danny Fiszman** (1945-2011)
The Arsenal director died in Switzerland after suffering from throat cancer. Fiszman, who made his fortune as a diamond dealer, sold his remaining 16.11 per cent stake in Arsenal to Stan Kroenke days before his death.

**Wiel Coerver** (1924-2011)
The Dutchman, who developed the eponymous Coerver Method of coaching individual ball skills, led Feyenoord to the Eredivisie title and UEFA Cup in 1974, and later went on to manage Indonesia's national side.

**Cheung Sai-ho** (1975-2011)
One of Hong Kong's best-known players died after jumping to his death from a 36th-floor flat following an argument with his wife. He made 56 appearances for Hong Kong, scoring eight goals, before retiring as a player in 2008.

# Paul GARDNER

THE WORLDWIDE VIEW

## What is the point of the six-yard box?

Today's subject: the goal area. I imagine everyone knows what it is – or, at least, where it is – that little box inside the penalty area, also known as the six-yard box and, for all I know, it may also be called the 5.5-metre box.

If you want the exact description, you can turn to the FIFA rules of the game, Rule 1, page 7, where it is meticulously described as a field marking, followed, three pages later, by a clear diagram.

The goal area would seem to be quite important in football, because it gets (by my count) 13 mentions in the rules themselves, followed by 20 more mentions in the "Interpretation" section.

Unfortunately, despite all these mentions, nowhere in the rule book is the purpose of the goal area explained. We're talking here about a well-defined area, a box, and that should signify that some action either can be performed only in that area, or is prohibited in that area.

But there is no such specification. After three mentions in Rule 1, there are 29 more-or-less identical mentions that have to do with the position from which a drop ball or a free kick shall be taken if an offence occurs within the goal area (basically, the ball is moved to the goal-area line). There is then one mention specifying that goal kicks shall be taken "from any point within the goal area", plus another mention telling assistant referees where to stand for a shoot-out (at the intersection of the goal line and the goal area).

So the six-yard area is shrouded in mystery. In the early years of the sport, six yards seems to have been some sort of magic number, an important measurement. In 1870, opposing players had to be six yards, not 10, away from free kicks, and when a throw-in was taken the ball had to travel at least six yards. The penalty area was based on an 18-yard measure (3 x 6 yards) and the penalty spot was 12 yards (2 x 6 yards) away from the goal line.

And – can you believe this? – by 1891 it had been decided that the goalkeeper was allowed to advance six yards off his line at a penalty kick. The privilege lasted for 14 years until, in 1905, he was restricted to remaining on his goal line.

In that same year, a line was drawn on the field, six yards from the goal line – just a line, of about 16 yards in length, not a box. By 1901 the six-yard box had arrived, and it had a defined purpose. It seems that violent charging of the goalkeeper had become a problem. It was countered, to some extent, by ruling that within the goal area the goalkeeper could only be charged if he had possession of the ball. Outside the goal area he was, apparently, fair game.

But that purpose has disappeared – it is certainly not spelled out in the current rule book. Indeed, it would make no sense in today's game, in which the goalkeeper gets considerable protection from referees throughout the entire penalty area. The six-yard box, is, in short, a vestigial field marking.

> Maybe a goalkeeper should have special protection within the goal area, which is then reduced once he steps outside that area

Maybe it should be returned to its original purpose, with the goalkeeper having special protection within it, although the keeper's protection should be reduced once he steps outside the area. At that point he would have to be a good deal more careful about barging into players with his knee raised, or clearing them out of the way by simply jumping straight into them – practices that almost define modern goalkeeping.

As a trade off, I'll give the goalkeeper a bit more room and make it a 10-yard box, while not revealing that my secret wish is to limit the goalkeeper's handling to that 10-yard area. Maybe I'm a bit ahead of my time on that one... WS

"Their World Cup begins tomorrow. However Brazilians think it starts the day after. In 2007, three years before the 2010 tournament kicked off, South Africa were much further forward in their preparations than Brazil is now"

**Sepp Blatter blasts sluggish Brazilian progress for the 2014 World Cup**

# PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

## EUROPE

**DELIO ROSSI**, who was sacked by Palermo in February after a 7-0 club-record home defeat by Udinese, was reappointed coach of the Serie A side five weeks later.

Returning...Rossi

Assistant coach **ANDRIES JONKER** has taken charge of Bayern Munich until the end of the season.

**ANTE MISE** has replaced Goran Vucevic as coach of Hajduk Split for a second time. The 43-year-old former international midfielder previously took charge during the 2008-09 season.

**HOLGER STANISLAWSKI**, who will leave St Pauli at the end of the season after 18 years with the club as a player and now as coach, has signed a three-year deal to take over at Hoffenheim.

Parma have appointed **FRANCO COLOMBA** as their new coach until the end of the season.

**ROBERTO OLABE**, who was Almeria's sporting director when they won promotion to La Liga in 2006-07, has been appointed coach until the end of the season.

Salzburg's technical coach **RICARDO MONIZ** has taken charge of first-team duties with the Austrian club.

Relegation-threatened Dutch side VVV Venlo appointed former striker **DIRK JAN DERKSEN** as coach until the end of the season.

NEC Nijmegen coach **WILJAN VLOET** will become technical director of Dutch second-division side Sparta Rotterdam at the end of the season. He will be replaced by current Excelsior boss **ALEX PASTOOR**.

Croatian coach **LUKA PERUZOVIC** has taken charge at Charleroi for a fourth time. He is the Belgian club's fourth boss this season.

**YOSSI MIZRAHI**, who resigned as coach of Maccabi Tel Aviv in January, has now taken charge of Ashdod for a third time.

## SOUTH AMERICA

Former Fluminense coach **MURICY RAMALHO**, who won the Brazilian championship last term, has agreed to take charge of Santos until the end of this season.

Long wait...Falcao

Former Brazil and Japan coach **FALCAO** has taken charge of Brazilian side Internacional – his first managerial job for 16 years.

**JAVIER TORRENTE**, the former assistant for the Argentina and Chile national teams, is the new coach of Newell's Old Boys.

Former Ecuador midfielder **ALEX AGUINAGA**, who won 109 caps for his country, was handed his first coaching job as he took charge of the Guayaquil-based club Barcelona.

## CONCACAF

Uruguayan coach **RUBEN ISRAEL** has taken charge of El Salvador.

German coach **OTTO PFISTER** has taken charge of the Trinidad & Tobago team – the 10th national side that he has coached.

## AFRICA

Former national coach **FRANCIS KIMANZI** has taken charge of Kenya Premier League club Sofapaka.

## ASIA

Former Manchester United assistant-manager **CARLOS QUEIROZ**, who was sacked as coach of Portugal last September, has taken charge of Iran.

Another chance...Queiroz

Responsibility... Blokhin

## Blokhin back in charge of Ukraine

Oleg Blokhin, who led Ukraine to the quarter-finals of the 2006 World Cup, has been appointed national coach for a second time, replacing interim boss Yury Kalitvintsey.

"I feel double responsibility," said the 58-year-old who was previously in charge from 2003 to 2007. "First is the national side's prestige and second is the European Championship, which Ukraine host. Our main goal is to win the European Championship, but we will need to make the first step: to get through the group stage."

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"I would have banned every French squad member who went on strike for two years. They humiliated the national shirt"

**Ex-France full-back Manuel Amoros hits out at *Les Bleus* coach Laurent Blanc for recalling World Cup 2010 mutineers-in-chief, Franck Ribery and Patrice Evra**

## Transfers, sackings and loans

### EUROPE

**VALERI KARPIN** resigned as coach of Spartak Moscow after a 2-1 defeat at Anzhi Makhachkala left the team bottom of the Russian Premier League with just four points from their first five games.

Retired...Frei (left) and Streller

Switzerland captain **ALEXANDER FREI** and his fellow Basle striker **MARCO STRELLER** both announced their retirement from international football following criticism from supporters after the 0-0 draw with Bulgaria in a Euro 2012 qualifier.

**SERSE COSMI** was sacked as Palermo coach after just 36 days in charge following the 4-0 defeat at Catania.

**FRANK SCHAEFER**, who was due to leave Koln at the end of the season, resigned after the 4-1 loss at Wolfsburg.

Hoffenheim coach **MARCO PEZZAIUOLI** will leave at the end of the season after winning just one of his first eight matches in charge.

Parma sacked coach **PASQUALE MARINO** after a 2-1 home defeat against bottom club Bari.

Hajduk Split sacked coach **GORAN VUCEVIC** after two successive defeats left the Croatian club 13 points behind rivals Dinamo Zagreb.

La Liga strugglers Almeria sacked **JOSE LUIS OLTRA** after a 3-1 home defeat by Athletic Bilbao left them bottom of the league and four points adrift of safety.

Salzburg parted company with coach **HUUB STEVENS** and sporting director **DIETMAR BEIERSDORFER** after three consecutive draws left the Austrian champions third in the Bundesliga with nine games to go.

Eleven days and one game after being appointed coach of Belgian club Charleroi, **ZOLTAN KOVACS** was relieved of his post.

After just two wins in 30 Eredivisie games this season, Dutch strugglers Willem II parted company with coach **GERT HEERKES**.

Former Aston Villa and Queens Park Rangers manager **JOHN GREGORY** resigned as coach of Israeli side Ashdod less than a year into a three-year contract.

### SOUTH AMERICA

After two years in charge of Newell's Old Boys, **ROBERTO SENSINI** quit his position as coach of the Argentinian club after the 2-0 loss to Velez Sarsfield – their sixth defeat in nine games.

All over...Sensini

Internacional of Brazil sacked coach **CELSO ROTH** after their 1-0 loss to Jaguares in the Libertadores Cup.

San Lorenzo coach **RAMON DIAZ** resigned after his side's 1-0 defeat away to Tigre in the Argentinian clausura.

Argentinian side Colon sacked their coach **FERNANDO GAMBOA** after their 2-0 defeat at home to Olimpo.

### AFRICA

South Africa striker **BENNI McCARTHY** left English side West Ham United after having his contract terminated by mutual consent.

Zambian coach **PATRICK PHIRI** was sacked by Simba after the club failed to retain their Tanzanian league title.

### ASIA

Al Ahli sacked former Aston Villa and Leeds United manager **DAVID O'LEARY** after just eight months in charge of the UAE club.

Sacked...O'Leary

**HWANGBO KWAN** resigned as coach of Seoul after a run of poor results in this season's K-League left the team in 14th place after seven games.

### Brazilians quit Japan after earthquake and tsunami

Striker Marquinhos has left J.League side Vegalta Sendai citing trauma caused by the massive earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan.

"It was a great shock for him to actually see the disasters caused by the earthquake and it is mentally difficult for him to keep playing. That's why we cancelled the contract with him," said a club statement.

Montedio Yamagata's Brazilian defender Hugo also returned to his homeland, joining Atletico Paranaense after his family urged him to stop playing in Japan.

Gone home... Marquinhos

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Brian
# GLANVILLE
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# The Cup still matters, no matter what the critics say

The FA Cup, like the theatre, is supposedly ever dying. Yet, in this season's semi-finals, 86,000-plus fans saw Manchester City sensationally defeat Manchester United, while the following day over 75,000 watched Stoke City so unexpectedly and comprehensively thrash Bolton Wanderers.

You might, in the circumstances, say that the FA were justified in staging the two semis at Wembley, with all the concomitant perils – not least had there been extra time in either game – even if their choice had plainly been dictated by their desperate need for funds.

I saw the first of these two semis, which for me posed the question, however seemingly sacrilegious, of do managers understand football?

How, you might ask, could one possibly impugn the mighty Alex Ferguson, who for so many years has accumulated one honour after another for Manchester United? Roberto Mancini, whose tactics since he came to Manchester have often been questioned, is perhaps another matter, yet both of them seemed to me to get things badly wrong, in each case by deploying a mistaken and ineffectual one-man attack.

> The first semi-final posed the question, however seemingly sacrilegious, of do managers understand football?

That Manchester United would be without Wayne Rooney was always going to diminish their effectiveness, yet it shouldn't have done so in as negative a way. What, you wonder, possessed Ferguson to believe that he could rely on a solitary Dimitar Berbatov, however many goals he may have scored this season, in his attack? Why did it take him until well into the second half to bring on the incisive little Mexican, Javier Hernandez, having left Berbatov, despite a bright beginning and one promising strike on target, to soldier on alone?

The Bulgarian is a player of superb technique and infinite menace when he can glide in unexpectedly, but leave him

Wind up...Balotelli (in blue) gets under the skin of United's players at the end of their semi-final



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up front on his own, where he can be so easily picked up and close marked, and his effectiveness, as we saw at Wembley, is nullified.

By the same token, it was hard to understand why Mancini picked the ever recalcitrant Mario Balotelli at all, after his various recent antics, let alone to deploy him, too, as a lone spearhead.

True, in the first half he did have one thundering shot, right footed from some 30 yards, which forced a resourceful save by Edwin Van der Sar, but, by and large he was seldom in evidence, though at the end as, alas, we know, he was up to his old tricks, goading Manchester United's fans and players alike.

Why, you wondered, did Edin Dzeko, who cost a mere £27million, never get on the field? Yes, he had lately been off form, but he might well have given Balotelli alternatives in a two-man attack, or, who knows, been inspired by the locale and the occasion if deployed alone?

Overall, you might say that City eventually called United's bluff and saw, after a tentative beginning, that this was a team far from formidable, uneasy in attack and negotiable in defence, and surely overpraised in their European Cup elimination of Chelsea.

## POTTERS' WEMBLEY DATE

And what to say about the devastation of Bolton Wanderers by Stoke City, except that, yet again, it shows us that one of the glories of football is its capacity for infinite surprise. Strange to reflect that Stoke, with their long, star-studded history, have never won the FA Cup or the league, though they did excel at Wembley on the occasion that they won the League Cup in 1972, with a team of gilded veterans.

That Bolton suffered a form of collective paralysis is plain, but not explicable. Even the unavailability of their present, outstanding marksman, Daniel Sturridge, who is, in any case, merely on loan from Chelsea, could hardly have made up for the pathetic ineptitude of their porous defence.

**Favourite...on his day, Pennant has been described as "unplayable"**

It's surely important to emphasise that Stoke flourished with their use of two electric wingers: Matthew Etherington, who so strongly struck the opening goal, on the left and my own particular favourite, Jermaine Pennant, whose dynamic run set up another, on the right. Each has, as we know had his vicissitudes.

Etherington gambled away immense sums of money, only to find saviour in the Stoke chairman, Peter Coates. Pennant has been a stormy petrel almost from his schoolboy days when, leaving Notts County in his native city for Arsenal as a teenager, he was fought over by his father and an agent. On various occasions, I've seen him score a midweek evening hat-trick at Highbury, against Southampton, mesmerise the West Bromwich Albion defence in an FA Cup tie when on loan at Watford, and play so brilliantly at St Andrews for Birmingham City that his then-manager – and good shepherd, after jail followed a car crash – Steve Bruce said afterwards that, in such form, Pennant was literally unplayable. Nor should one forget how well and bravely he played in a Liverpool team beaten in their second European Cup Final, against Milan.

In the pre-war years Stoke could call on the incomparable Stanley Matthews, who later, in his latter forties, rejoined them from distinguished years at Blackpool, a formidable centre-forward, in Freddie Steele, and an accomplished wing-half in the "Chinaman", Frank Soo, and in the war and post-war years, in that elegant centre-half Neil Franklin, who so badly blotted his copybook by sneaking off, lying to the FA about his wife's pregnancy, to Colombia, thus missing England's 1950 World Cup finals.

Today, Kenwyne Jones and muscular Jon Walters make a formidable strike force at Wembley, but reaching the Final was still such a surprise!

## TORRES, A BUSTED FLUSH

Meanwhile, what of Chelsea, Fernando Torres and their troubles? Waiting for Torres to come good had been like waiting for Godot. Fifty million pounds spent and just one goal to show for it.

Sympathy is probably due to Carlo Ancelotti, but he really hasn't been very brave in his favouring of Torres, ludicrously, at the expense of Didier Drogba who, of recent weeks has, every time he's come on, given the Chelsea attack a drive and threat which, with Torres, is wholly absent.

One saw it when covering Chelsea's match at Stoke, it was evident at Old Trafford when, even though Chelsea had gone down to 10 men with the expulsion of Ramires after 70 minutes, Drogba still fired in a powerful equaliser, while at the Hawthorns, against West Bromwich Albion, he was formidable again.

Though Ancelotti has publicly and, perhaps, predictably insisted that the wishes and demands of the billionaire owner, Roman Abramovich, have had nothing to do with his favouring of Torres, it's very hard to believe. Damned if he does, damned if he doesn't you might say.

True, Abramovich can probably draw that £50million out of his own pocket before going off to buy yet another yacht, an art gallery for his new amour or a chunk of Belgravia property, but it is hardly surprising if he has wanted to see something of a return on what has so far been a disastrous investment. Come to think of it, so was the £30m poured down the drain, not to mention massive wages, for a largely defunct Andriy Shevchenko.

Since Ancelotti is surely going to go anyway he might just as well have gone down fighting. Torres, for all his past excellence has, thanks to persistent injury, been a busted flush for months. WS

● *Brian Glanville's football novel* **The Rise of Gerry Logan**, *called by Franz Beckenbauer "the best book on football ever written", has been republished by Faber Finds.*

## CHANGES AFOOT AT STAN'S ARSENAL?

"Jaded" was the word Arsene Wenger used to describe his team's dull display against Liverpool, and weary it was. It does look, though, as if Wenger will receive committed backing from the new virtual owner of the club, the American billionaire Stan Kroenke – the man whom Peter Hill-Wood, still chairman but largely marginalised, initially described as not the sort of person Arsenal wanted. Before long, irony of ironies, he was on a plane to the states, begging Kroenke to come aboard.

Will Kroenke bring David Dein, cast out by the late Danny Fiszman, back to the board? With the £71million received from controversial Uzbek businessman Alisher Usmanov safely pocketed for his shares, Dein doesn't need really to do anything. But remember he it was who brought Wenger to the club and he does have dynamism.

**Money man...Kroenke**

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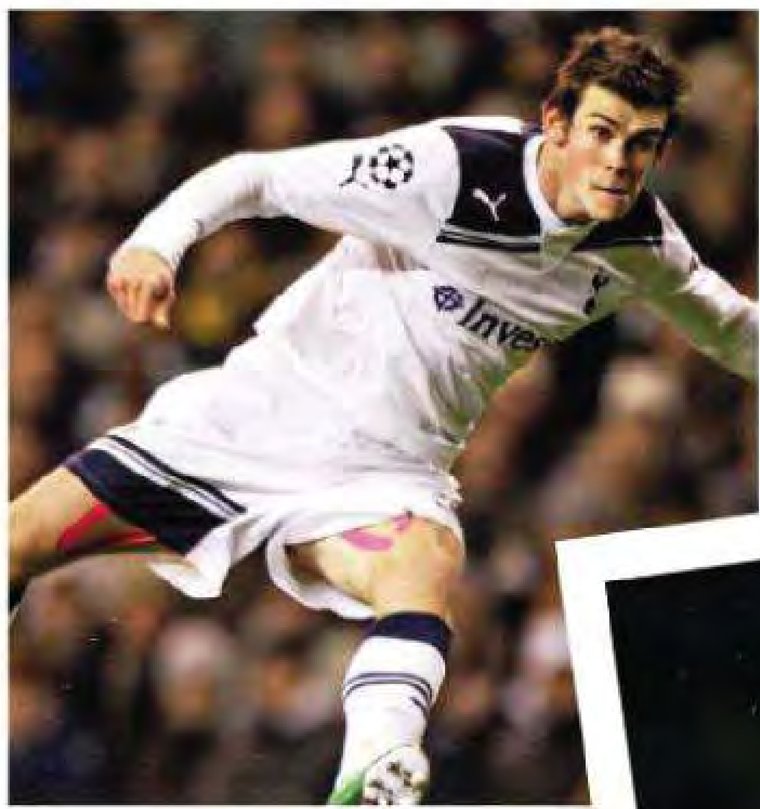
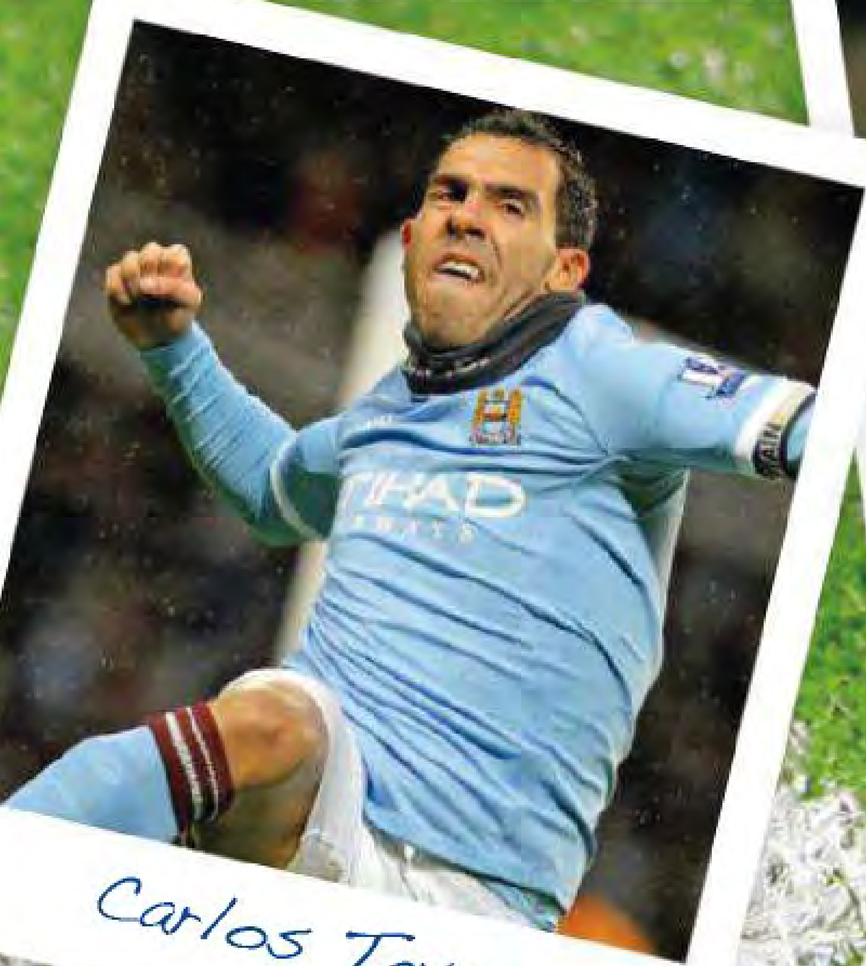
# EUROPE'S MOST WANTED



Gareth Bale

Didier Drogba

Neven Subotic



Carlos Tevez

Clarence Seedorf

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# RED

This summer's transfer market will be the first to be influenced by UEFA's new Financial Fairplay regulations. Nick Bidwell and Gavin Hamilton report on the likely movers

The summer transfer market is almost upon us and the coming months will, inevitably, be dominated by big-money deals, the scouting of promising youngsters and general wheeler-dealing. This year, however, UEFA's Financial Fairplay (FFP) regulations loom large. Whether we witness the last of the big spenders remains to be seen, but a new mood of fiscal prudence is certainly influencing club spending patterns.

FFP is UEFA president Michel Platini's plan to curb the excessive spending by clubs who have, over the past decade, enjoyed backing from sugar-daddy owners or financial injections in the form of bank loans and overdrafts.

Next season will be the first monitoring period for FFP, which will require clubs to balance their books by 2015 in order to gain a licence to compete in European competition.

The rules are designed to ensure that clubs spend within their means on wages and transfer fees, with UEFA hoping to create a more level playing field for clubs throughout Europe.

UEFA will allow clubs to register losses up to

a total of €45million (almost £40m) over three years from 2011-12 in preparation for FFP. Losses of €30m will still be allowed in the following three years after 2015 as clubs are encouraged to regulate their spending.

As ever, the devil is in the detail. Money spent on stadium and youth development does not count as expenditure for the purposes of FFP, while clubs must also prove that commercial deals have been agreed at market rates and not engineered by rich owners to circumvent the rules.

"All the clubs are fully aware of the rules," says a UEFA official who helped draw up the proposals. "It's now up to them to comply."

Clubs will have to supply audited accounts to UEFA via their national associations. A "financial control panel", headed by former Belgian prime minister Jean-Luc Dahaene, will decide whether clubs have met the FFP criteria – and how to punish those who fall short.

UEFA is keen to point out that exclusion from European competition is the ultimate sanction, the punishment being a last resort. "We have a slope that leads to Hell, which is exclusion from competition," William Gaillard, Platini's closest advisor said.

> Exclusion from European competition is the ultimate sanction, the punishment being a last resort

Before offending clubs are excluded from UEFA competition, they could be fined or monitored for a year while given a chance to reduce their overspending.

"It is not the case that if you are in breach of the regulations, you will be excluded," said the UEFA official.

UEFA is also likely to consider the general trend of a clubs' indebtedness.

"The panel will always take into account what is the projection for the future," added the official. "So if the club is likely to be in breach but it has a plan to break even the following year, it will be seen more favourably than a club which plans to be worse in the future."

Inevitably, Manchester City, with losses of £121m last season thanks to the free spending of owner Sheikh Mansour, have come under the greatest scrutiny. However, City chief executive Garry Cook insists: "Financial Fairplay is on our conscience, we talk about it at every board meeting and it's part of our long-term plan."

In part, English clubs have come under greater scrutiny simply because they are more open about their finances than those in other countries – such as Italy – where there is less financial transparency.

English clubs spent a record £225m in the January 2011 transfer window, though a significant proportion of that figure involved the recycling of money from the deal that took Fernando Torres to Chelsea from Liverpool.

Already, the signs are that the new regulations could impact on this summer's transfer spending. This time last year, Manchester City had already identified such targets as David Silva, signed from Valencia, James Milner of Aston Villa and Hamburg's Jerome Boateng. However, this summer, irrespective of whether or not they qualify for the Champions League for the first time, City are likely to embark on a clear-out of names – Carlos Tevez, Emmanuel Adebayor, Shay Given, Wayne Bridge, Shaun Wright-Phillips, Roque Santa Cruz and Jo – before signing any big-name targets.

The sale of Tevez would be controversial given his high-profile status within the club, but it would provide the funds for the acquisition of Wesley Sneijder or Alexis Sanchez.

### Failure to qualify

While qualification for the Champions League may prompt City owner Sheikh Mansour to loosen the purse strings in anticipation of increased revenues, others are likely to rein in their spending if they fail to qualify for next season's competition.

Tottenham Hotspur, having exceeded all expectations in reaching this season's quarter-finals, will face speculation over the future of players such as Gareth Bale and Luka Modric. Spurs insist Bale is not for sale, but a big-money deal could fund a series of acquisitions that would boost a push back into the Premier League's top four next season.

Similarly, Bayern Munich will come under pressure to part with the likes of Arjen Robben, Bastian Schweinsteiger and Franck Ribery if, as seems likely, they finish outside of the Bundesliga's top three.

On the other side of the coin is a club like Lille, for whom Champions League qualification is likely to enable them to keep hold of much coveted Belgian midfielder Eden Hazard.

Elsewhere, spending patterns are likely to be determined by possible coaching departures, with the uncertain future of Carlo Ancelotti at Chelsea

**Cesc Fabregas**
**Arsenal**

The annual "will he, won't he" debate is with us again, but every year the case for his return to Spain gets stronger. Barcelona and Real Madrid still covet the Spain midfielder, but their transfer priorities may lie elsewhere this summer.

Up for grabs...(from left) Ribery, Robben and Schweinsteiger

# NEW HORIZONS

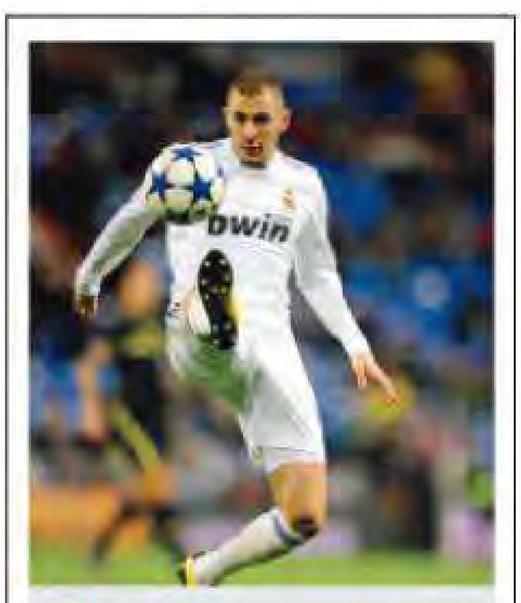
The players seeking a fresh challenge this summer

## Alberto Aquilani
Liverpool

On loan at Juventus this season, the midfielder may stay permanently. Juve hope an offer in the region of £10m will do the trick.

## Gareth Bale
Tottenham Hotspur

A revelation in this season's Champions League, but if Spurs fail to qualify for next year's competition, a big-money offer may hard to resist.



## Karim Benzema
Real Madrid

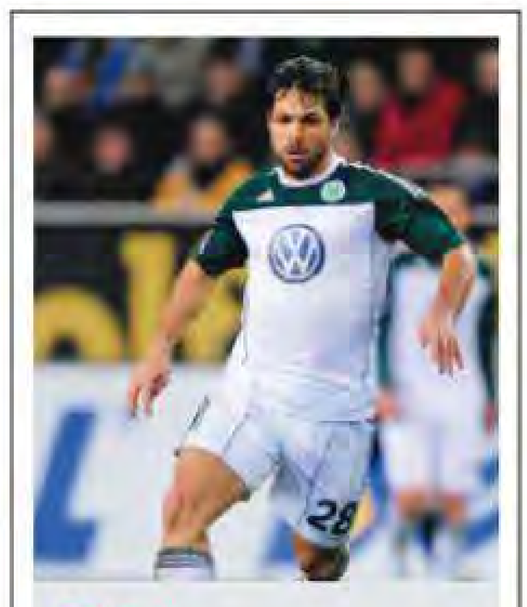
Real boss Jose Mourinho continues to have reservations about the French striker. A leading club in England, or Juventus may try to take advantage.

## Fabio Coentrao
Benfica

The left-back is being heavily linked with Real Madrid but Benfica, flush with cash from January's sale of David Luiz to Chelsea, can afford to hold out.

## Mathieu Delpierre
Stuttgart

The French centre-back has built up a fine reputation in the last couple of years and is on the radar of clubs in England, Italy and Spain.



## Diego
Wolfsburg

The mercurial Brazilian playmaker cannot leave Germany quickly enough. His most persistent suitors are Lazio, who will pay up to £12m for him.

## Maicon
Internazionale

Real Madrid coach Jose Mourinho still has a soft spot for the Brazil right-back. Although not at his best this season, demand for him remains high.

## Steve Mandanda
Marseille

Those who know their football in Provence believe the keeper is heading for the exit. Juventus, to replace Gigi Buffon, is one option.

## Manuel Neuer
Schalke

Out of contract next summer, Germany's leading keeper has refused to sign a new deal and is being heavily tipped to join Bayern Munich.

## Andrea Pirlo
Milan

Juventus, Roma, Internazionale and Manchester City are chomping at the bit to recruit the veteran midfield strategist on a Bosman free.

## Clarence Seedorf
Milan

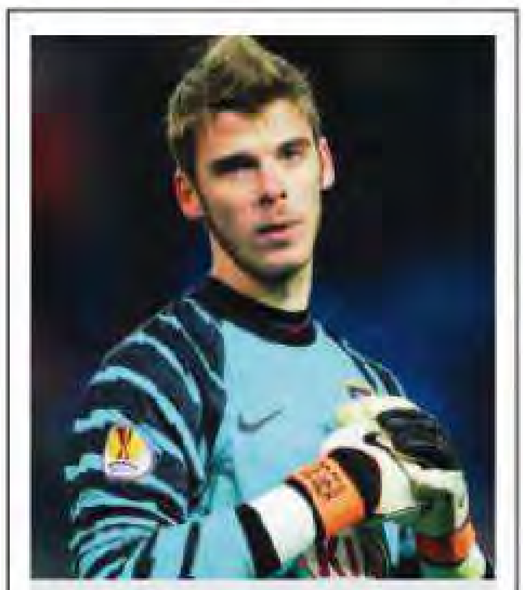
Nine seasons after arriving at the San Siro, the Dutch schemer is seeking pastures new: Corinthians (his wife is Brazilian) or Tottenham Hotspur.

## Maarten Stekelenburg
Ajax

The keeper's contract runs out in the summer of 2012 and Ajax must be tempted to cash in now. The Premier League looks a likely destination.

# UPWARDLY MOBILE

The talented youngsters heading for bigger things



## David De Gea
Atletico Madrid

The Spain Under-21 goalkeeper is another being linked with Old Trafford as the retirement of Edwin Van der Sar looms.

## Paulo Henrique Ganso
Santos

The Brazilian club have placed a £50m valuation on their international playmaker, but that should not deter the Milan clubs from bidding.

## Hulk
Porto

After three seasons in Portugal, the Brazilian striker is set to move on this summer, with Italy or Spain his most likely destination.

## Rogelio Funes Mori
River Plate

The teenage forward is likely to be the latest talent, along with Erik Lamela, sacrificed to stave off a financial crisis. Offer over £12m.

## Erik Lamela
River Plate

Atletico Madrid, Liverpool and Juventus are all linked with the teenager, who has starred in this year's clausura.

## Romelu Lukaku
Anderlecht

The teenager has been likened to Didier Drogba and Anderlecht are keen to extract an offer of £20m from Chelsea.

## David Ospina
Nice

The Colombia international is one of the most underrated keepers in Europe. Paris Saint-Germain or a La Liga posting seem the most likely.

## Javier Pastore
Palermo

Club owner Maurizio Zamparini insists the attacking midfielder is not for sale. History says a pile of Barcelona or Roma cash will force a rethink.

## Nuri Sahin
Borussia Dortmund

A German title should be the final chapter of the Turkish midfielder's time in the Ruhr. Real Madrid and Inter are both prepared to make bids.

## Alexis Sanchez
Udinese

Manchester City lead the chase for the Chilean, who has spearheaded the Serie A side's push for a Champions League place this season.

## Neven Subotic
Borussia Dortmund

Despite being dubbed "untransferable" by the club, the highly-impressive Serb centre-back is interested in a switch to the Premier League.

## Gregory Van der Wiel
Ajax

Pursued by Bayern Munich and a host of Premier League heavy-hitters, the impressive right-back is inching towards the out door.

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leading to doubts over summer plans at Stamford Bridge.

Having spent so heavily in the January transfer window on Torres and David Luiz, Chelsea are expected to be more selective this summer. Belgian teenage striker Romelu Lukaku has been heavily linked with a move to London, while a marquee signing – like a Kaka or Neymar – to satisfy the ambitions of owner Roman Abramovich cannot be ruled out.

Both Chelsea and Manchester United are in need of a creative injection in midfield – hence the links with Inter's Dutch playmaker Sneijder, who could be sold to fund a renewal of

Misunderstanding... Fabregas (left) and Wenger

the Italian club's playing resources after they surrendered their league title to city rivals Milan.

Across London at Arsenal, the long-term future of captain Cesc Fabregas remains uncertain – witness the angry reaction by Arsene Wenger to an interview given by his captain to Spanish magazine *Don Balon*. Arsenal had hoped Fabregas would use the opportunity to declare his commitment to Arsenal; instead, he claimed that leading coaches in Spain would not survive for three years without winning any silverware – a comment which was interpreted as being critical of Wenger, whose Arsenal have not won a trophy for six years.

Wenger accused *Don Balon* of "twisting" the midfielder's words, but a tape of the interview revealed that the magazine had reproduced the Spaniard's words verbatim.

Wenger's outburst was a reflection of the frustration he feels at his team again falling short this season. A new goalkeeper and a dominant centre-back are Arsenal's priorities in this summer's dealings, irrespective of whether Fabregas stays or goes.

The Arsenal star remains highly coveted by Barcelona and Real Madrid, although both clubs have priorities in other positions, notably in defence, where Madrid are keen to sign Portuguese left-back Fabio Coentrao.

For all their success under Pep Guardiola in recent years, Barcelona's

**Spanish football is more indebted than any other country in Europe, with estimated debts of £3billion**

transfer record has produced a significant overspend. Marketing *director Laurent Colette admitted* recently that only their £125m sponsorship deal with the Qatar Foundation had prevented the sale of star players such as Lionel Messi.

Spanish football is more indebted than any other country in Europe, with estimated debts of more than £3billion, so it remains to be seen whether FFP can install greater fiscal discipline to the spending patterns of clubs such as Villarreal, Valencia and Atletico Madrid.

In Italy, there is general cynicism that UEFA would ever ban a club the size of Milan or Inter from the Champions League. Over the past decade, Inter have spent as heavily as the likes of Chelsea and Manchester City, but their lack of detailed annual accounts makes it hard to nail down the exact cost of last year's Champions League victory.

Milan coach Massimiliano Allegri *recently called on club owner Silvio* Berlusconi to spend big in this summer's transfer market. The reality is that Milan's deals are likely to remain relatively modest, with Bosman deals for defenders Taye Taiwo of Marseille and Roma's Philippe Mexes on the cards. Brazilian playmaker Paulo Henrique Ganso of Santos could be Milan's

## Neymar
### Santos

The brightest talent in Brazilian football has been tipped for a move to Europe for the past 18 months. His father, who acts as his agent, is keen to push through a deal, but Santos may prefer to wait until the January 2012 window before doing business with the likes of Chelsea, Internazionale or Barcelona.

most high-profile signing.

Palermo's Argentinian striker Javier Pastore and Udinese's Chilean winger Alexis Sanchez are both high on Inter's wish-list but they may be outmanoeuvred by either of the two Manchester sides, United or City and may have to sell in order to buy.

Juventus appear determined to confirm Alberto Aquilani, paying Liverpool £13m for the privilege, while the club is apparently considering the sale of goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon to help balance the books as they head into their first season in their new purpose-built stadium (on the site of the old Stadio delle Alpi).

Roma, under possible new American owners, could be a new destination for Buffon, one of a number of well-known goalkeepers on the move. The retirement of Manchester United's Edwin Van der Sar and the determination of Germany No1 Manuel Neuer to move on from Schalke is likely to prompt a chain of goalkeeping moves, with Spanish youngster David De Gea the favourite to move to United, and Neuer set to replace rookie Thomas Kraft at Bayern Munich.

### South American talent

South American youngsters who could be heading to Europe include River Plate duo Erik Lamela and Rogelio Funes Mori. Although Chelsea recently bucked the trend by signing Brazil Under-17 starlet Lucas Piazon from Sao Paulo, the Iberian peninsula remains the first port of call for South America's most promising talent.

Juan Manuel Iturbe, the Argentina-born Paraguay sensation from the recent South America Under-20 Championship, has confirmed he will join Portuguese champions Porto when he turns 18 in June.

Iturbe's arrival is likely to prompt the sale of either Brazilian striker Hulk or Colombian forward Falcao. The Europa League finalists have been one of the most effective operators in the European transfer market over the past decade. Their "buy low, sell high" policy may have disappointed fans who have seen star players depart on an almost annual basis, but as a blueprint for financial stability, it has been hugely effective.

It may well prove to be a strategy that is copied by an increasing number of clubs seeking to comply with UEFA's new era of financial prudence. WS

## ESTABLISHED STARS

The big names who could move on

**Emmanuel Adebayor**
Manchester City

Real Madrid are unlikely to seek to make the Togolese striker's current loan permanent, but City still want to offload him.

**Sergio Aguero**
Atletico Madrid

Real Madrid would love to sign the Argentinian from their neighbours, although the buyout clause (around £40m) may make a deal difficult.

**Gianluigi Buffon**
Juventus

Reports in Italy suggest that Juventus could sell their biggest asset to Roma in order to fund a summer spending spree.

**Didier Drogba**
Chelsea

The arrival of Fernando Torres has inevitably prompted speculation about the future of Drogba, who is 33. A return to Marseille is a possibility.

**Samuel Eto'o**
Internazionale

Despite insisting he is happy at Inter, the striker could be let go. He has a massive salary (€10m per year) and the Italians need to balance the books.

**Kaka**
Real Madrid

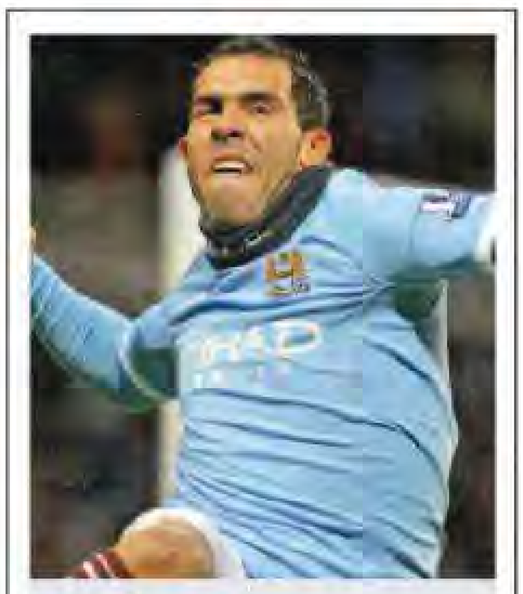
Hampered by injuries in Spain, Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich remains a huge fan of a player who could be the answer to a lack of creativity.

**Arjen Robben**
Bayern Munich

The Dutchman has spoken publicly of his desire to leave Munich if Bayern fail to qualify for the Champions League. Injury prone but still highly coveted.

**Wesley Sneijder**
Internazionale

The Holland playmaker could be used to raise money to fund Inter's summer signings. Manchester United would lead any chase if he became available.



**Carlos Tevez**
Manchester City

The Argentinian has had a difficult relationship with City boss Roberto Mancini and his agent, Kia Joorabchian, is thought to favour a move to Italy.

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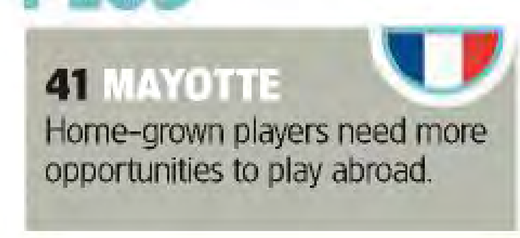

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Unpaid wages forced one of the country's top teams to take drastic action and go on strike.

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JAMES MONTAGUE
in Manama

# Shocking silence from FIFA and AFC

## Football offers no comment on imprisonment of national team

In a parallel universe Alaa Hubail is a national hero. He is celebrated as the player who led the line for a national team that became arguably the biggest David versus Goliath story football has ever seen.

After winning the Golden Boot at the 2004 Asian Cup – a tournament where the tiny Persian Gulf state of Bahrain finished fourth – Hubail's goals fired his country to not one but two successive World Cup finals, in Germany and South Africa. With a population of under a million, they would likely remain the smallest country to ever qualify. Back home, a nation blighted by Islamic sectarianism would rejoice under one flag. Shia and Sunni alike would feel the same pride.

But fate, history, bad luck – call it what you like – had other plans for Hubail and Bahrain. This much is true: Bahrain's second-highest international goalscorer did pick up the Golden Boot at the 2004 Asian Cup, but "*Al Ahmar*" (the red) lost to Trinidad & Tobago in the 2006 World Cup play-off by a single goal. Four years later, after stunning performances against regional giants Japan and Saudi Arabia, they reached the play-off again, only to lose to New Zealand, once more by a single goal.

> "The people in charge don't care about our international image"
> **Human rights activist Nabeel Rajab**

Hubail had injured a cruciate ligament after the 0-0 draw against the Kiwis in Manama, missing the second leg. His then-coach, the Czech veteran Milan Macala, lamented what turned out to be a crucial loss, saying: "We will miss Alaa and I hope that he recovers soon."

It is on such slim margins that heroes are made or broken. Now Hubail sits in a Bahraini prison cell, along with fellow national-team players, his brother Mohammed and 2009 Asian Player of the Year nominee Sayed Mohamed Adnan. After being sacked by his club side, Al Ahli of Manama, and the national team, he was arrested for taking part in the protests that began on Valentine's Day 2011 and nearly brought down the Bahraini Al Khalifa royal family.

### Three months of protests

The arrests were part of a crackdown following three months of protests against the regime – a Sunni royal family ruling over a majority Shia population who wanted more democracy and accountability. The royal family saw it as an Iranian-funded, Shia-inspired plot. Troops from Saudi Arabia and the UAE poured over the border to maintain calm, fearing protests would spread to the Shia enclaves.

More than 30 protesters have been killed, hundreds of others spirited away for their part in the uprisings or suspended from their positions, including 150 sportsmen and officials. The most high profile were shamed on national TV, which labelled them "stray hyenas". Hubail, who as a trained paramedic had treated injured protesters at the now infamous Pearl roundabout, was subjected to a 15-minute grilling about his "treachery" on state TV. He was on the phone, still behind bars.

"The violence and abuse is so huge. We have too much work. We can't cope here. A lot of doctors, a lot of people have been targeted: soccer players, basketball players, teachers, unionists," says Nabeel Rajab, head of the Bahraini Centre for Human Rights. Rajab was himself arrested in the middle of the night – on charges he had fabricated a picture showing a dead protester, allegedly killed by the army – and claimed he was tortured, threatened with rape and then released.

"The people who are in charge don't care about international image," he adds. "They are military people. All of the sport



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Jailed...Hubail's only "crime" was, as a trained paramedic, to treat those who had been injured protesting against the Bahraini royal family

associations are headed by the royal family. We have 100 associations headed by the royal family."

Yet despite the international outcry there has been silence from both FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation. Arresting footballers for exercising their democratic rights would appear to be a clear breach of the rules on political interference but the Bahraini FA have escaped punishment.

When contacted by *World Soccer*, a FIFA spokesman said: "FIFA has not yet received official information on this issue... FIFA, and the whole sporting movement, considers it crucial to defend the autonomy of sport and the independence of sporting bodies. The use and abuse of football for political purposes, in any shape or form is a practice which FIFA would actively seek to sanction, should the case fall under its jurisdiction and evidence be provided that is in conflict with the FIFA statutes."

But nothing has happened. And the answer may lie in FIFA's presidential election this June. Sepp Blatter has been challenged by the head of the AFC, Mohamed Bin Hammam, who is standing on a platform of change. Indeed, Bin Hammam wrote on his personal blog that "we need to create an environment where individuals are not reluctant to stand up for what they believe in".

The AFC has remained silent on Bahrain. Despite repeated attempts, Bin Hammam hasn't responded to our questions. But with each of FIFA's associations having a vote in the presidential election, and with the result hanging in the balance, Bahrain may yet prove to be a crucial kingmaker.

In May 2009 the head of the Bahrain Football Association (BFA), Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim al Khalifa, who is also a senior member of the royal family, stood against Bin Hammam in a vicious election for a place on FIFA's executive committee.

In an interview with *World Soccer* before the vote, Sheikh Salman said that he still counted Bin Hammam as a friend but that he "opposes what he advocates, which has been a form of dictatorship in his administration, a misuse of funds, breaching FIFA and AFC statutes and causing divisions within Asian football".

Ironically, Salman described his own campaign as one for democratic principles. "This is what true democracy is all about when one individual is challenging another for a post because he believes he can do better," he said.

Bin Hammam narrowly won the election, but 21 associations sided with Salman, who said: "I have congratulated the president but my message is clear. We have 21 countries unhappy...we have to ask why, and the president needs to win back their confidence."

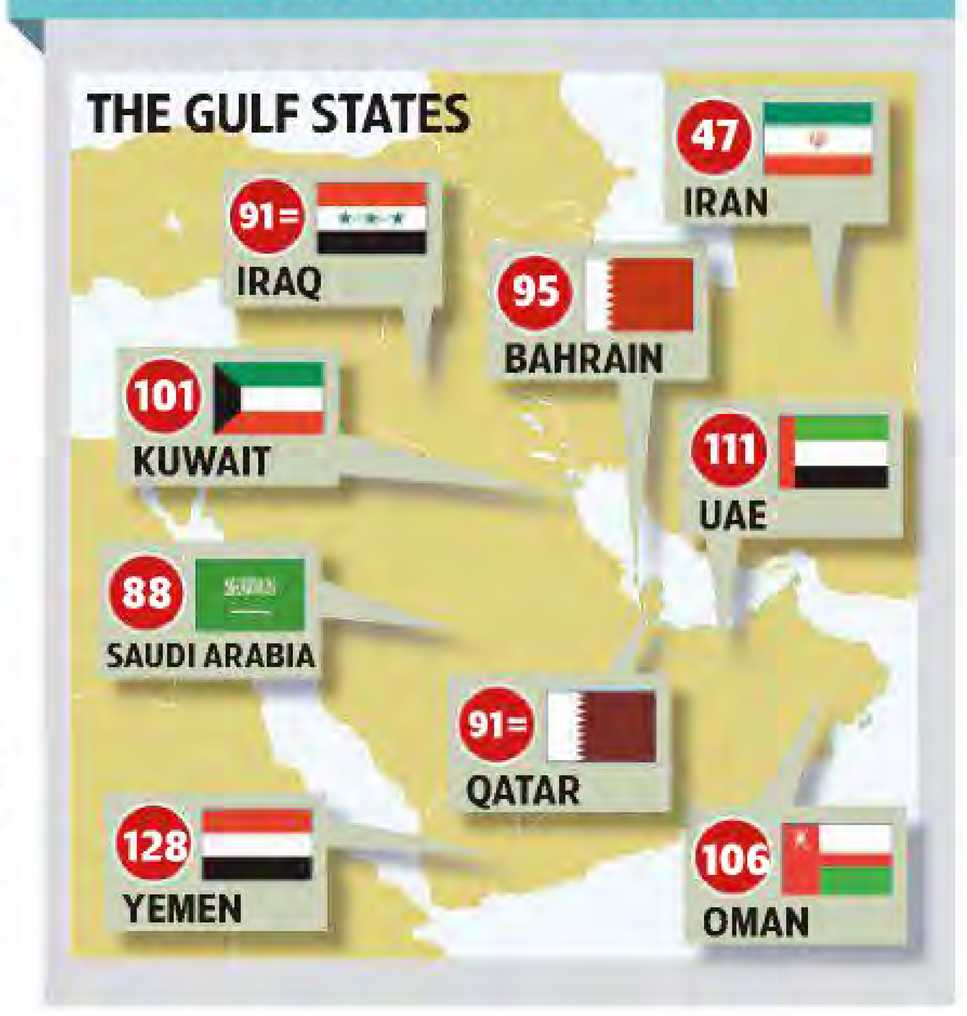
Twenty-one votes would come very handy in June, but that is a long way away. The arrests continue, and Bahrain's footballers remain under threat for little more than expressing desire for a change in government. The BFA denied breaching any rules, telling *The Times*: "The suspension [of the footballers from Al Ahli] falls under misconduct, and the breaching of the rules and regulations of sporting clubs... not to engage in any political affairs."

Whatever the truth, the most talented group of footballers in the 40 years since Bahrain's independence has been damaged inexorably. When Macala prepared for the World Cup play-off against New Zealand, he spoke of how the national team had been a symbol of unity, like in Iraq. "We do not talk of religion here," he said.

Now, that symbol is gone, replaced by recrimination and resentment. "The silence of FIFA and the AFC raises a question," says Rajab. "Either the Bahraini FA have a green signal or FIFA and the AFC accept such violence against footballers, who have rights like any other human to be a citizen. It is time for FIFA to raise its voice.

"The people of Bahrain look at FIFA and ask: 'Where are you?'" WS

## NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH: FIFA RANKINGS



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MIKE PLASTOW
in Tokyo

# Football plays its part

## A nation attempts to come to terms with natural disaster

Football remembers...players and fans observe a minute's silence before the charity match at Osaka's Nagai Stadium

The new J.League season was not quite a week old when the earthquake struck at 14:46 on Friday, March 11. Defending champions Nagoya Grampus had drawn their first game of the season at home to Yokohama F-Marinos, thanks to a last-gasp equaliser the previous Saturday, and were heading off to Sendai to play Vegalta at the Yurtec Stadium on the afternoon of March 12. Needless to say, that match, in one of the worst-hit cities, never happened. The J.League promptly put its entire programme on hold, and play would not resume until April 23.

It was an extraordinary six weeks as the teams, players, administrators and supporters first tried to come to terms with the shattering and life-changing events, and then asked serious questions about the relevance of sport in such a situation. It does great credit to Japanese football that answers were found, and the J.League even provided a model for sensitive crisis management and contributions to public morale.

In practical terms, football emerged relatively unscathed from the disaster. No J.League players were injured, although many of their homes were damaged and Vegalta coach Makoto Teguramori ended up having to sleep in his car. The Vegalta and Antlers clubhouses were both destroyed, while stadiums were damaged in Sendai, Mito and Kashima, but only Kashima Antlers' World Cup arena was still unfit when league action returned.

Some players felt the tragedy particularly personally. Kashima midfielder Mitsuo Ogasawara, for example, came from the coastal city of Ofunato, which was almost entirely wiped out by the devastating tsunami that followed in the wake of the earthquake. Ogasawara immediately headed home to comfort and support the survivors. Many other players and teams followed suit, distributing footballs and kit to children in the disaster zone, as well as organising and taking part in coaching sessions.

Soon, individual clubs throughout the country started to arrange a series of charity matches. Regulations didn't allow for games with charged admission to be organised at such short notice, but it didn't matter. The crowds came and donated massively and the rules were swiftly relaxed. The biggest charity match of all, between the national team and a J.League select XI in Osaka, sold out in less than an hour. European teams allowed all of their Japanese players to take part alongside home-based stars, and together they took to the streets to shake hands with fans and collect donations.

> People across Japan were thirsting to come together and make their feelings known

People across Japan were thirsting to come together, contribute and make their feelings known – and the matches offered them the perfect outlet for a normally reserved nation to express themselves. Football had never been more relevant.

The resumption of league football, however, may be more difficult. Lives and livelihoods have been shattered and entertainment for entertainment's sake remains a slightly embarrassing issue while many are still suffering so much.

A five-week shutdown of the J.League, originally scheduled from the end of June to allow for the national team's participation in the Copa America, will now be used to make up the fixture backlog. But this inevitably has a knock-on effect, with clubs now unwilling to release their players for international duty. As a compromise, the Japanese FA presented a list of 20 Europe-based players it wants to call up, but foreign clubs are equally unimpressed by the prospect of losing their players and Schalke (Atsuto Uchida) and Stuttgart (Shinji Okazaki) have already said they want nothing to do with the tournament.

With the FA now talking to university teams about calling up some pre-Olympic players, the situation is, in effect, a mess – which is a great pity after Japanese football rallied so magnificently in the aftermath of the disaster. WS

PEDRO PINTO
in Lisbon

# Three semi-finalists hailed as new dawn

## Portuguese sides have dominated this season's Europa League

Portuguese football was guaranteed at least one representative in the Europa League Final, in Dublin on May 18, after three Primeira Liga sides made it through to the semi-final stage, where Benfica met Braga and Porto faced Spain's Villarreal in an all-Iberian last four.

Considering Portuguese clubs have previously only won a total of six European trophies between them, having three sides in the semis is quite an accomplishment and hopes are high that one of them will go on to capture the nation's first continental title since Porto lifted the Champions League in 2004.

> "It's good for Portuguese football to show it has strength in depth"
> **Braga goalkeeper Artur**

"It's good for Portuguese football to show it has strength in depth," said Braga keeper Artur after his side had reached the semi-final stage of a European competition for the first time. "Portuguese football is [becoming] more competitive."

However, while much of the country's media was hailing the dawn of a new era for Portuguese football, the facts tell a slightly different story.

Promising... Braga's Paciencia

In reality, of the 33 players who lined-up for Benfica, Braga and Porto in their quarter-final second legs, only seven were born and raised in Portugal. As multicultural as most clubs are these days, that is still a worrying sign for Portuguese football that it is not producing enough home-grown talent.

Historically, most of the country's top players have always left for greener and richer pastures, but a decade ago there were a lot more prospects coming through – not only at the big clubs but throughout all the top-flight teams. In the last round of domestic fixtures before March's international break, only 42 per cent of those who started for the 16 teams in the Primeira Liga were Portuguese nationals. That number is inferior to the percentages of most of Europe's top leagues.

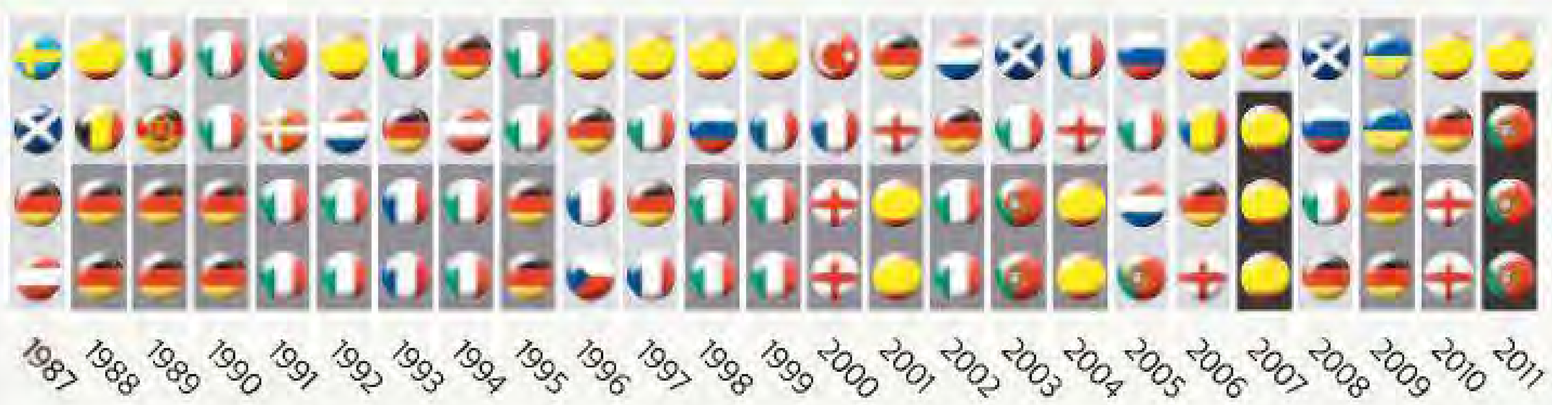
However, this does not mean Portugal should not get any credit for its clubs' achievements in the Europa league. Even though not that many players were Portuguese, all three coaches were. Porto's Andre Villas-Boas, Benfica's Jorge Jesus and Braga's Domingos Paciencia are all extremely talented and should be praised for taking their respective sides so far in the competition.

Meanwhile, while Benfica, Braga and Porto are celebrating an unforgettable season in Europe, 2005 UEFA Cup finalists Sporting Lisbon find themselves in freefall. More than 30 points behind champions Porto, the Lions of Lisbon have a debt estimated at £125million and, having lost both their president and their coach, there would appear to be little sign of light at the end of the tunnel.

Elections held at the end of March may have given Sporting fans new hope, with incoming president Luis Godinho Lopes promising fresh funds and a new era of stability at the club, but a lot more than promises are needed at the Estadio de Alvalade, and a lot of work has to be done to revive a team which has not won a trophy for nine years. WS

Benfica boss...Jesus

## EUROPA LEAGUE/UEFA CUP SEMI-FINAL REPRESENTATIVES BY COUNTRY

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HOWARD JOHNSON
in Paris

# 'Quotagate' sparks federation crisis

## Secret tape reveals discussion on quotas for dual-nationality players

The French Football Federation may have thought it had finally put its own "*annus horribilis*" firmly behind it following the disaster of last year's World Cup and those striking players on the bus at Knysna. How very wrong they were...

France is a country where the debate about race, national identity and football is never far below the surface. So recent revelations, on the *Mediapart* website, that senior members of the federation – including national coach Laurent Blanc – had been involved in discussions about putting hidden quotas on the number of players of dual nationality being groomed for the national team have lit one very hot bonfire. So far only one senior figure has been burned: the FFF's national technical director Francois Blaquart – the man who made the clearest comment about being in favour of such quotas during the meeting on November 8 of last year – was suspended by the federation and the ministry of sport on April 30.

The story emerged after one of the participants at the private meeting recorded the conversations on a mobile phone and then distributed them. Blanc felt this was potentially so damaging that he hastily arranged a personal press conference, in Bordeaux on April 29, to clarify his own position.

"I've never heard anyone talk about systems that would take quotas into account," he stated. "And to say that the coach supported such a project is a lie."

It would appear not, though. In response, *Mediapart* released a verbatim transcript of the meeting, which included exchanges between Blanc, Blaquart and national Under-21 coach Erick Mombaerts. It would be mischievous in the extreme to suggest that Blanc's comments betray a racist outlook, as his only concerns are about dual nationality in a footballing context, but in France the notion of dual nationality is inherently a racial issue and there is no doubt that Blanc did actively participate in a conversation about the introduction of quotas.

> "To say that the coach supported such a project [quotas] is a lie"
> **National team boss Laurent Blanc**

Of course, it's a hugely embarrassing situation, both for the federation and for Blanc. And while there are some questions that need to be asked about the moral legitimacy of a private meeting

**Debrief...Blanc tries to makes his position clear**



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ending up in the public domain, the whole episode has put the race issue right back on France's footballing agenda. Defining people by their race or religion – even for government censuses – is banned in France. The state refuses to identify its citizens in this way because *egalité* (equality) is one of the three fundamental tenets of the French republic, alongside liberty and brotherhood.

### Happy to commit

It should be said that the vast majority of dual-nationality French players are more than happy to commit to France if they feel they will make the senior international grade with *Les Bleus* – possibly for such practical reasons as better pay, more sponsorship opportunities and higher profile, as well as for any personal affiliation. It's almost entirely the players who aren't going to go all the way, players that France doesn't want for the national team, who throw their lot in with another country. So it appears that what really sticks in the craw of the French federation is that it is effectively funding the international development of other countries' players.

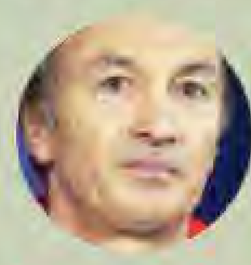
Prior to June of 2009 this wasn't such a problem. But it was at that point that FIFA changed its rules, allowing players to change country at any age provided they hadn't played a full international. Previously a player had to make a definitive decision before his 21st birthday. But wouldn't the federation be better off lobbying for a rule change here, rather than debating the idea of secret, "anti-constitutional" quotas?

It is true that some top-class players have slipped through French fingers – Moussa Sow, Ligue 1's top scorer this season with Lille and a European Under-19 champion with France in 2005, chose to represent Senegal as recently as 2009 – but cases like his are rare. Football federations the world over invest millions in developing talent, knowing that the rewards are reaped via those who make the grade, not by those who fall short. And by getting embroiled in a debate about quotas, the French have opened a can of worms that could so easily have remained closed.

It's highly unlikely that this episode will prove fatal for Blanc, but what "quotagate" has done is shine a spotlight on French sensitivity to racial issues, both in its football and in its society. WS

**"We can map things out with a kind of quota, without actually calling it that. We can't talk about this. You have to be careful."**

**Excerpts from the leaked tape of the federation meeting last November:**



**Erick Mombaerts [national Under-21 coach]:** "Should we deal with the problem and limit the number of kids who can change their nationality? Yes? No? Should we do it? What do you think Laurent?"

**Laurent Blanc [national coach]**: "I'm in favour. What's happening in football at the moment really bothers me. In my opinion we've got to eradicate it. And this has nothing whatsoever to do with racism. When people wear the national shirt for the under-16s, 17s, 18s, 19s, 20s and under-21s, then go and play for north African or African teams, well that bothers me enormously. We really need to limit that."

**Francois Blaquart [technical director]:** "What would be ideal, in fact, would be to say – though not officially – that actually we won't take more than a certain number of kids who might end up changing nationality. We can map things out with a kind of quota, without actually calling it that. We can't talk about this. You have to be careful."

**Blanc:** "I don't have a problem with coloured people. Nor with north African people. I have no problem with them. But the problem is that those people need to decide and try to let us help them decide. If there are – and here I'm speaking bluntly – only blacks in our junior academies and that these black kids feel French and want to play for the French team, then I'm more than happy with that."

**By contrast, Francis Smerecki, the national Under-20 coach, was the most vocal in displaying his unease about the whole idea in the meeting:**

**Smerecki:** "Nowadays the rules have changed. We went looking for black players by the truckload. And now you're saying we want to get rid of them?"

**Blanc:** "I didn't say 'get rid of them'."

**Smerecki:** "Well yes, after a fashion, because certain people are proposing the figure of 30 per cent. That means you want to get rid of people in one way or another. We have to be clear about that... it's discriminatory. If you limit, then who are you going to keep? The whites? The less gifted?"

FloreKegg.com

PADDY AGNEW
in Rome

# Internazionale flatter to deceive

## Holders provide fleeting challenge to Milan's title conquest

Having enlivened this season's title race with a splendid fightback, reigning Italian and European champions Inter unexpectedly blew up in one cruel April week which saw them wave goodbye to both titles.

Not for the first time, it was the Milan derby which provided the watershed moment of the season. In hindsight, perhaps the writing was on the wall even before the kick-off, with Milan fans impishly displaying a banner which read "Leonardo's Last Supper". The point being that just down the road from the San Siro, in the monastery of Santa Maria delle Grazie, hangs arguably the most famous of all the depiction's of Christ's Last Supper, painted by Leonardo Da Vinci.

Underneath the huge replica of the great masterpiece was written "The Inter Judas" in reference to another Leonardo: not Da Vinci, but Milan's former Brazilian coach Leonardo Nascimento De Araujo, who, in the view of the Milan fans, has this season changed faith, turned "traitor" and for "30 pieces of silver" opted to take charge of their loathed cousins.

The banner was just the beginning of a dreadful night for the Inter coach as it took just 43 seconds for Brazilian striker Pato to give Milan the lead. When Inter's Cameroon striker Samuel Eto'o managed to shoot wide of an open goal, from all of three yards, in the 43rd minute the writing was on the wall.

The Inter judas...Milan fans mock their former coach Leonardo

A red card for Inter's Romanian defender Cristian Chivu in the 54th minute was followed eight minutes later by Pato's second for Milan. Sub Antonio Cassano made it three with a 90th-minute penalty before partly besmirching a perfect Milan night by getting sent off.

If that defeat was bad, worse was to follow four days later when Inter effectively crashed out of the Champions League with an astonishing 5-2 quarter-final, first-leg home defeat to German club Schalke, a modest Bundesliga team languishing in mid-table anonymity.

> Inter's Champions League exit concluded a miserable season in Europe for Italian sides

Some will argue that Inter's collapse owed much to the absence of their two best central defenders, Argentina's Walter Samuel and Lucio of Brazil, who were both injured, but the shock of the Milan derby defeat must also have played a part.

Leonardo would later bemoan that "accursed week", arguing that, despite everything, Inter had put themselves into a position where they had again been in line for the Champions League/ Serie A/ Italian Cup treble of last season. This is still a valid team, concluded Leonardo, but their Champions League exit, allied to that of Milan (beaten by Tottenham Hotspur) and Roma (beaten by Shakhtar Donetsk), concluded a miserable season in Europe for Italian sides.

Former Milan and Italy coach Arrigo Sacchi was scathing of Italian football in his *Gazzetta dello Sport* column, writing: "The value of our championship contest has been painfully put into perspective by the fact that all our teams were eliminated from European competition, beaten by opponents with a lot less history and cash behind them.

"Italian football had its golden moment when we partially abandoned our typically individual and defensive game. Just look at the facts: in the period 1989-1999, Italian clubs won the Champions League four times and were runners-up five times, missing out only twice on the Final. In this same period, Italian clubs won eight out of 11 UEFA Cup finals and came second twice, missing out on the Final only once.

"By comparison, in the period 2000 to 2011, Italian clubs won the Champions League three times, came second twice and failed to make the Final on seven occasions. Worse still, in that period there was not a single UEFA Cup/Europa League Final victory for an Italian club.

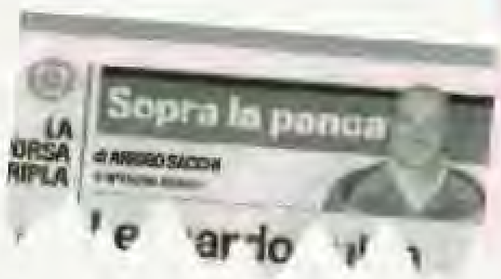
"There are many reasons for this decline: our youth teams produce little, we insist on promoting ageing players, we have failed to evolve both technically and tactically. Just one example: if one of our teams fails to score much, we immediately go looking for a big-name striker without ever thinking of ways to improve the overall team game.

"We have forever played a game that is more defensive than offensive, but the reality is that you grow much more by trying to construct something rather than by trying to break something."

Needless to say, Sacchi's words are unlikely to have much impact on the impending summer transfer market as the big clubs once more seek out big-name signings. WS

## WHAT THE PAPERS SAY...

"The value of our championship contest has been painfully put into perspective by the fact that all our teams were eliminated from European competition, beaten by opponents with a lot less history and cash behind them"
**Arrigo Sacchi, writing in *Gazzetta dello Sport***



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NICK BIDWELL
in Munich

# Bayern hero falls to zero

## Louis Van Gaal's early departure as the Bavarians' coach was as predictable as it was brutal

Bayern Munich's recent sacking of their Dutch coach Louis Van Gaal was as foreseeable as a packed local beer garden on a sunny day.

The Bayern top brass may have felt they were doing the right thing in early March when, reacting to their team's mediocre domestic form, they announced Van Gaal would be walking the plank at the end of the season. But fudged decisions served on a bed of lame-duck leadership rarely makes for an appetising dish, and when Bayern subsequently bowed out of the Champions League to Internazionale and continued to struggle to nail down a top-three Bundesliga spot, LVG's credit finally ran out. Within minutes of a disappointing 1-1 draw at Nurnberg, the parting of the ways was complete.

It's easy to see why. Should Bayern fail to qualify for next season's Champions League, many of their stars look sure to jump ship. Arjen Robben has said as much. So has Bastian Schweinsteiger.

Only 12 months ago Van Gaal, who has been replaced for the final few weeks of the campaign by assistant Andries Jonker, was nothing short of a local cult hero, hailed as the chief who steered the club to a near-clean sweep of honours in 2009-10 (Bundesliga, German Cup and runners-up in the Champions League).

Poor results aside, the issue which effectively sealed Van Gaal's fate this season was his mid-term insistence that 22-year-old rookie keeper Thomas Kraft take over from veteran Hans-Jorg Butt.

Not only did Kraft's increasingly nervy displays damage Van Gaal's reputation as a talent spotter, the inverting of the goalkeeping hierarchy also had the board hopping mad. As far as the Dutchman was concerned it was simply a case of sticking to one of his most revered principles and giving a worthy youngster a chance in the first team. However, for power-brokers such as chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, president Uli Hoeness and general manager Christian Nerlinger, the switch made no sense at all and they quickly voiced their misgivings.

Nowhere to hide...Bayern's form under Van Gaal this season has been mediocre

Why incorporate an untried No1 into an already shaky rearguard? Why worry about bedding him in when negotiations were at an advanced stage to bring in Schalke's national team keeper Manuel Neuer this summer? It was a valid argument. Let the steady Butt hold the fort until the end of the season then change the guard.

Van Gaal and Kraft – who was dropped the minute his mentor departed – were not the only ones to be knocked cold by the fallout. Hoeness has not come out of it well, either, and is now under relentless attack from fans vehemently opposed to the purchase of Schalke flag-bearer Neuer.

> Van Gaal's fate was sealed by his insistence that rookie Thomas Kraft take over from Hans-Jorg Butt

These days the air at the Allianz Arena is thick with hatred and such is the rancour that in an April league game against Borussia Monchengladbach, someone even thought it apt to hoist a banner denouncing Hoeness as a liar.

Under fire, too, for striving to help city rivals 1860 avoid bankruptcy, Hoeness swiftly received the backing of his fellow inner sanctum occupants Rummenigge and Karl Hopfner. "We can only be extremely irritated by these shameful incidents," went their communique. "Such bad behaviour against Uli Hoeness is not the style of this club and we'll never accept it. He has achieved so much at Bayern and hasn't nearly had enough credit for it. And yet he takes this kicking. We have to condemn these actions. It must never happen again."

Although certainly no diplomat and one of German football's true agent provocateurs, Hoeness, 40 years a Bayern player, general manager and president, deserved better. Much better.

At least the atmosphere at Bayern will be substantially less feverish next season. Boss-in-waiting Jupp Heynckes, currently at Bayer Leverkusen, has none of Van Gaal's egocentricity and stubbornness, and, having coached the Bavarians twice before (1987 to 1991 and late in the 2008-09 campaign), he knows the club's politics and foibles.

Meanwhile, arguably Hoeness' most bitter enemy, ex-Koln and Stuttgart coach Christoph Daum is back in business in the Bundesliga, taking over the reins at relegation-threatened Eintracht Frankfurt from the axed Michael Skibbe. Wherever Daum goes hype and controversy usually tag along, but no one at Frankfurt will care if Mr Motivator manages to lift them out of the doldrums. WS

**KEIR RADNEDGE**
in Pristina

# Struggling for recognition

## Kosovo strives for acceptance by football's governing bodies

In some shape or form, all the other fragments of the former Yugoslavia have managed to move on, with Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia all having their independence and their places in the United Nations family.

The one exception is Kosovo. Despite declaring independence in February 2008, joining the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in 2009, becoming a member of the Eurozone, and being recognised by 75 separate countries, the fledgeling nation has yet to receive UN recognition. And without that it cannot gain membership of FIFA and UEFA, and therefore access to significant television and sponsor revenues.

The lack of official acceptance means that Kosovo cannot take part in any form of international football. And without regular national-team exposure it cannot attract television...which means it has no money to invest in grass roots.

The local league, which is sponsored by the Raiffeisen Savings Bank, has four divisions and most of the players in the top flight, the Super League – which runs from August to December and March to June – are part-time. The facilities, however, are dire. As Tord Grip, the former long-time aide to Sven-Goran Eriksson, says: "They need some development money or a sponsor who wants to get in at ground level in Kosovo so they can have some artificial pitches. That would be a start.

"The state of the pitches here...well, an English player would refuse even to train on them."

These days Grip is part-time assistant to Albert Bunjaku, the man who is coach of Kosovo's representative side.

In the 1980s the burgeoning unrest in Kosovo over Belgrade's control prompted many of the minority Serb population to head back north prior to the decade-long conflict which erupted in the 1990s. It is that warfare which forces Bunjaku, himself an emigre, to look abroad for players, most of whom grew up and learned their football in countries where their families had fled to escape the violence.

With club-release obligations only applying to national teams with FIFA membership, Bunjaku depends entirely on goodwill for player availability – and many of those players who are released are warned by their clubs that they must only play for 45 minutes.

Although few and far between, any games played by Kosovo are a big deal – even if they are usually fraught with problems. In October last year, a friendly against Xamax Neuchatel almost fell through after FIFA rejected a request from the Swiss federation to sanction the game. In the end, Xamax went ahead with it all the same. Then, in March of this year, Kosovo were supposed to play Turkish side Bursaspor – only for the visitors to pull out just days before the match for unspecified reasons. Fortunately, Macedonian champions Renova stepped into the breach – with a squad that included Kosovar Bosnian defender Faruk Statovci.

Renova played out a goalless draw before a 4,000 crowd in Pristina, but the pitch was dreadful. The bounce robbed both teams of confidence and denied fans the goals which would surely have arrived but for the ruts and ridges which made the ball behave as if it were a rugby rather than a football version.

Room for improvement...Kosovo's need for investment in its football infrastructure is underlined by the poor facilities at the rundown City Stadium in Pristina

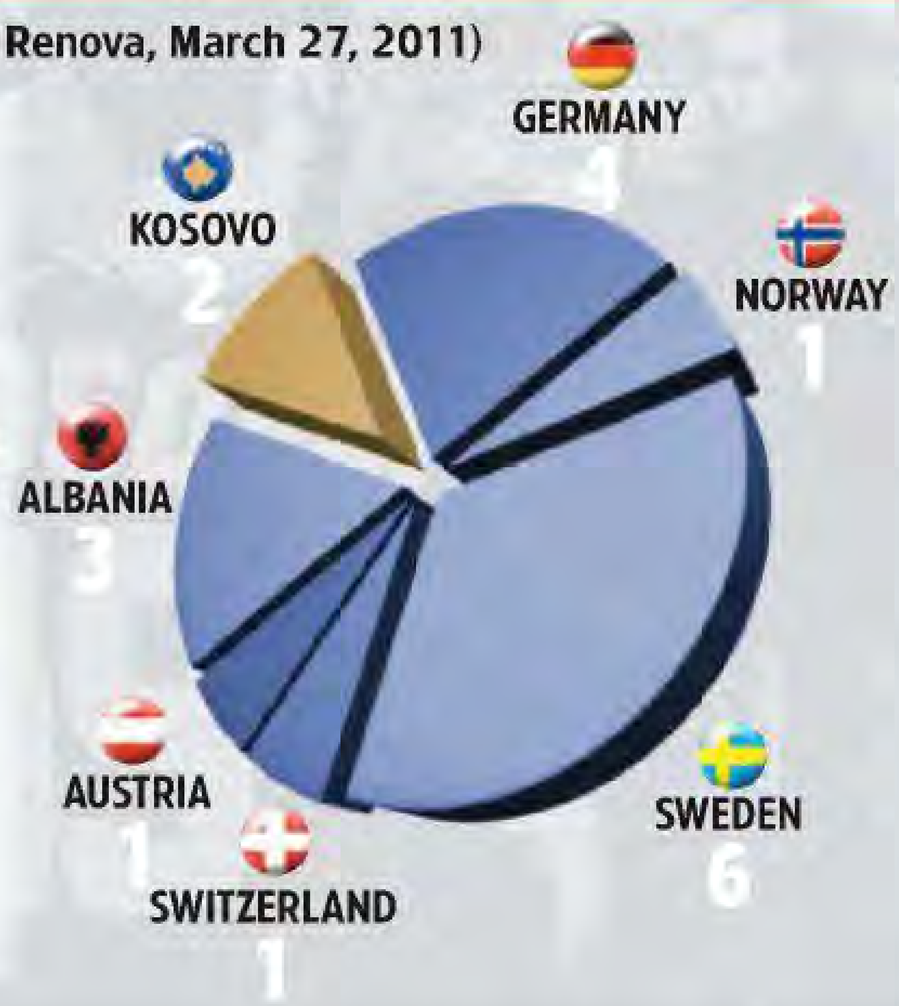
### Football history

Kosovo's football history dates back to 1946 with the creation of its own football federation in Marshal Tito's post-war Yugoslavia. The region's major club Pristina played in the top flight of the Yugoslavian league in the 1980s and their star player was forward Fadil Vokrri, who went on to later play for Partizan Belgrade and

### WHERE THE KOSOVAN PLAYERS PLY THEIR TRADE

**THE KOSOVO SQUAD** (v Renova, March 27, 2011)

**GOALKEEPERS**
**Etrit Berisha** (Kalmar, Swe)
**Valmir Bytyci** (Besa)
**DEFENDERS**
**Kujtim Bala** (Halmstads, Swe)
**Liridon Kukaj** (Vllaznia Shkoder, Alb)
**Fisnik Papuci** (Hysi)
**Avni Pepa** (Start, Nor)
**Shqipran Skeraj** (no club, ex-Koblenz, Ger)
**MIDFIELDERS**
**Enis Alushi** (Paderborn, Ger)
**Shqipron Bektashi** (Freiburg, Ger)
**Ardian Gashi** (Helsingborg, Swe)
**Ilir Nallbani** (Vllaznia Shkoder, Alb)
**Anel Raskaj** (Halmstads, Swe)
**Faton Toski** (Bochum, Ger)
**Valdet Rama** (Orebro, Swe)
**FORWARDS**
**Kristian Nushi** (St Gallen, Swi)
**Alban Rama** (Erzgebirge, Aut)
**Kushtrim Lushtaku** (Orebro, Swe)
**Ilir Berisha** (Pristina)



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Yugoslavia. Vokrri is now president of the Kosovo federation, splitting his time between homes in France and Pristina, and is assisted by general secretary Eroll Salilhu, a coach and lawyer who played for Pristina before enjoying spells in Turkey, Switzerland and Germany.

Their campaign for permission to play against FIFA members was stepped up in 2009 when Vokrri paid the first of three visits to football's governing body to put forward Kosovo's case. He says he received a sympathetic hearing from president Sepp Blatter and secretary-general Jerome Valcke, but little else.

Franz Beckenbauer, who stands down as a member of FIFA's executive committee in June, visited Kosovo himself in early March, but whether he will put in a word with Blatter remains to be seen.

One positive development did materialise in October last year when Kosovo was admitted to FIFA's new Transfer Matching System (TMS). This at least means Kosovar clubs' player contracts now have a registered value, which is extremely welcome progress after seeing so many talents lured away for nothing in the past.

> There is far more the international sports community could do for Kosovo right now without stepping on anyone's political toes

**Talking tactics... Kosovo coach Albert Bunjaku enjoys a rare get-together with a squad assembled from all over Europe**

While FIFA and UEFA have pointed out to the Kosovars the statutes which demand that new applicants must be members of the United Nations, FIFA has 208 members yet the UN only 191. So, even setting aside the British quartet who are not sovereign nations, room for manoeuvre clearly exists.

Failure to obtain football recognition will, ultimately, be measured in terms of hard cash. UEFA's recent congress in Paris approved the centralised marketing of television rights for its World Cup and European Championship qualifiers. But while this development was good news for other small associations, politics and timescale mean Kosovo will not be on board to benefit.

It is fair to say that nothing connected with the Balkan states down the centuries has ever been simple.

Kosovo is as complex as any, and no outsider should dare to cast judgment. Its history has been a bloody muddle of regional and local conflicts, featuring subservience to the Ottomans, the Serbs and then – from a peacekeeping point of view – to the United Nations and NATO.

Frequently scapegoated over drugs and human trafficking issues, if Kosovo were to be officially recognised as a nation it would rank among the poorest in Europe. However, the issue here is clear, before even approaching the recognition tangle: there is far more the international sports community – FIFA, UEFA and the IOC – could do for Kosovo right now without stepping on anyone's political toes.

Or is all the constant talk of social development and spreading the gospel merely for the fashionably needy regions of the world? **WS**

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COLOMBIA

REX GOWAR

# Striking a blow for player power

## Deportes Quindio squad take drastic action over unpaid wages

When Jeison Lizalda made his first-team debut for Deportes Quindio in April, the 16-year-old goalkeeper left the pitch in tears after a 5-0 rout by Millonarios.

The youngster only knew he was going to play a couple of days beforehand and does not even figure on the Quindio squad list. He actually plays for an under-20 team called Boca Juniors de Valle who are owned by Hernando Angel – the man who also owns Quindio.

Lizalda and his Boca team-mates were drafted in for Quindio's apertura game because the professional squad had gone on strike over unpaid wages.

Quindio's players were owed four months' wages in a country where a footballer's average pay packet is nowhere near that of the big European leagues yet critics still accuse the players of behaving like union activists.

Players threatening to boycott matches is nothing new in Colombia, where clubs owing money to their staff is just one of the endemic ills of the game. The players of Once Caldas, who were crowned South American champions in 2004, came close to refusing to play in the Libertadores Cup over unpaid wages, but Quindio's players went a step further when they turned their words into action.

Quindio goalkeeper Cristian Pinzon, who has been with the team for 10 years, says that, with a squad worth a mere £40,000, the club based in the city of Armenia are cheap to maintain – yet there is little sponsorship, few fans and income from ticket sales is minimal.

"The most important thing is for this to help change many things in Colombian football," explains Pinzon. "Things have been like this since last year, but we weren't strong enough to take a decision."

> "When players' rights are not complied with, a team could be dissolved"
> **German Vargas Lleras, MP**

In an interview with the Bogota daily *El Espectador*, Pinzon said the players feared taking such action because they had families to support and might be ostracised as rabble-rousers. He said people in power in the Colombian game did not want to see change because that would erode their power.

"Now what's important is for the government, [club] directors, the Dimayor [league governing body], the Asocolfutpro [players' union] and we footballers to get together to change this at the roots," said Pinzon. "The Dimayor are to blame because if they prevented clubs who are in debt to their players from playing, this [problem] wouldn't exist."

The government sports body, Coldeportes, threatened Quindio with a 30-day suspension and the players agreed to turn out for the next game, at home to Real Cartagena, which they won 2-1, after being assured that they would get part of their unpaid wages from a sponsorship deal that was going through.

The Colombian government is trying to end the many problems in the game, including labour issues, with a draft Sports Law that has been passed by the senate and only requires a presidential decree to become law.

"The [Sports Law] says that when players' working rights are not complied with, a team could be dissolved," explains the Minister of the Interior and Justice, German Vargas Lleras.

The law states that clubs will be punished if players go unpaid for more than 60 days and sets out rules for clubs who are being encouraged to become limited companies and sell shares.

The Sports Law will also try to control and break up the violent *barras bravas*, the gangs of hard-core hooligans, with long jail sentences. A recent newspaper editorial slammed the laxity of controls at stadiums after a group of young fans entered a ground carrying the coffin of a teenage friend who had been shot dead the day before so he could "watch" his last match.

"There was supposedly a dead person inside," commented the paper. "It could have been drugs, a knife, a pistol." WS

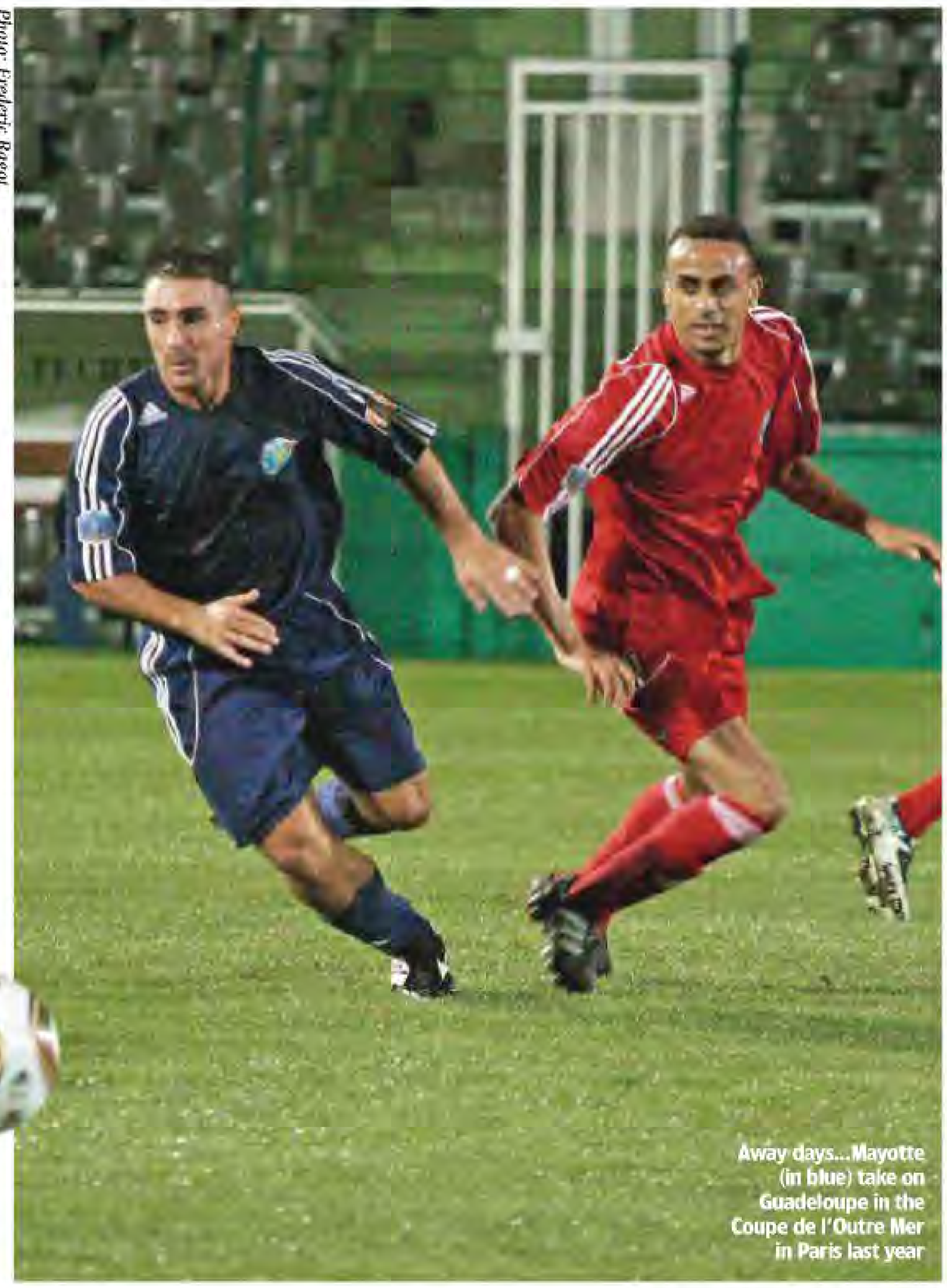
**Diehard fan... Deportivo Cucuta supporters took the coffin of 17-year-old Cristofer Jacome into the ground during their game against Envigado**

STEVE MENARY

# French dependency

## Spreading their wings is a problem for the island footballers

Photo: Frederic Ragot



Away days...Mayotte (in blue) take on Guadeloupe in the Coupe de l'Outre Mer in Paris last year

Players from the last vestiges of France's colonial empire may be a common sight in the French leagues or even playing for *Les Bleus*, but not in Mayotte.

Toifilou Maoulida, born at Dzaoudzi on the Indian Ocean island but raised in Marseille, was the first to break through. Starting out at Montpellier in 1997, he played for Rennes, Metz, Monaco, Marseille, Auxerre and more recently Lens, but few have emulated him.

El Fardou Ben Nabouhane plays for Vannes and midfielder Adifane Noussoura won a short-term contract with Lincoln City in England in 2010 but was released three months later.

"It's very difficult as we cannot play in any FIFA or CAF cups," says Frederic Suflaj, who is the assistant manager of the Mayotte national team. "We're dependent on France."

The son of a Croatian emigre who played for Locomotiv Zagreb before fleeing Marshall Tito's Yugoslavia for Marseille, Suflaj himself emigrated to the French department in 2001. He began coaching club sides, then, from 2009, worked with a national team who struggle for games but are certainly improving.

The Ligue de Football de Mayotte (LFM) dates back to 1973 and this summer Mayotte will travel to the Seychelles for their second appearance in the Indian Ocean Games' football tournament. On their debut, in 2007, they reached the semi-finals, losing to the hosts Madagascar before beating Mauritius to clinch third place.

Mayotte's only other international outing is the Coupe de l'Outre Mer, a competition for French colonies staged biannually in Paris and bankrolled by the amateur wing of the French Football Federation.

At the inaugural event in 2008, Mayotte were crushed 6-1 by eventual winners Reunion and crashed out after losing their other group game to French Guiana 4-2. Last year, with Suflaj roaring encouragement from the touchline, Mayotte finished fourth. Only against Guadeloupe in a play-off for third place did his charges come unstuck, losing 4-0.

There are 15,500 players in Mayotte and the LFM runs four leagues, with a dozen clubs in the top flight. The second and third tiers are each split into two pools and the season runs from April to November, although disruption from monsoons is common.

The game is amateur, but a big club match or a Cup Final in the capital Mamoudzou can draw crowds of 3,000 or more. Clubs have a new outlet with the recent formation of an Indian Ocean Champions Cup, which also involves sides from Reunion, the Seychelles, Mauritius, Madagascar and the Comoros.

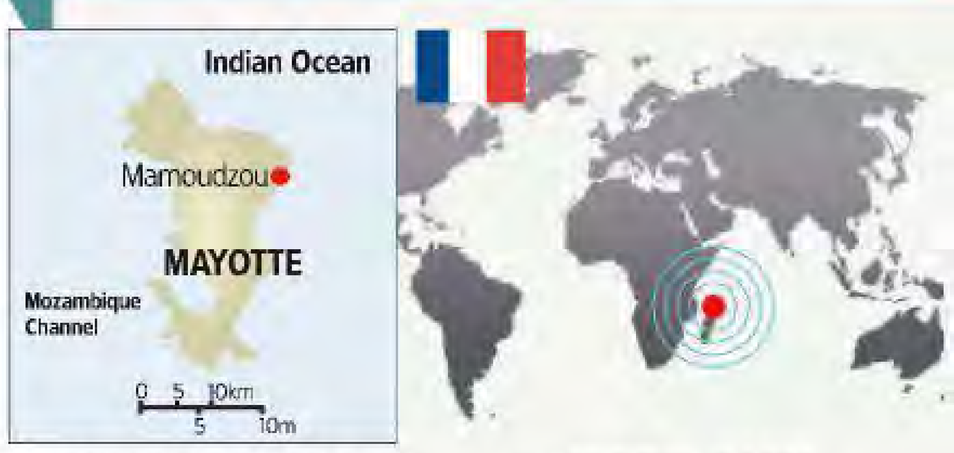
> The national team struggle for games in official competitions but are certainly improving

Teams were split into two groups and, in January, Mayotte's representatives Mtsapere beat Komorozine from the Comoros 3-2 but went out after losing 6-0 to Madagascar's CNAPS Sport.

The competition was organised by the Union des Federations de Football de l'Ocean Indien and of the six members, Reunion is a CAF associate member, four are in FIFA, while Mayotte is in limbo.

"We have a lot of problems with Madagascar and Comoros because they are in FIFA," says Suflaj, who is unlikely to take these problems lying down. WS

## WHERE IN THE WORLD?




**Mayotte is an island in the Indian Ocean, between northwestern Madagascar and northeastern Mozambique. Geographically part of the Comoros Islands, it has been politically separate since a 1974 referendum in which it elected to remain under French rule.**

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|---|---|
| **Population** | 194,000 |
| **Size** | 144 square miles |
| **Capital** | Mamoudzou |
| **Language** | French |
| **Religion** | Islam |

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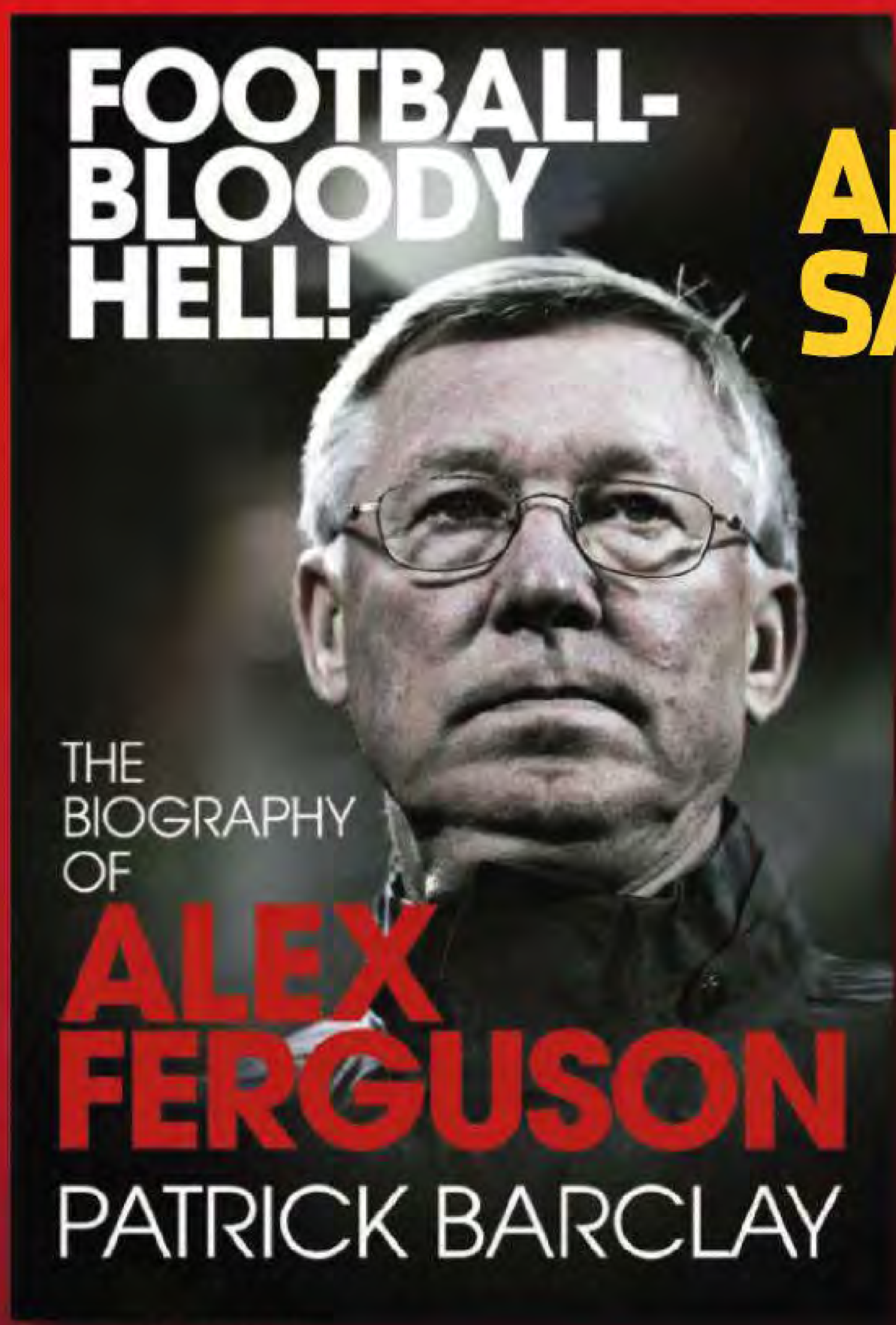


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PLAYER Biography

# Zlatan Ibrahimovic

Criticised for being arrogant and outspoken, the Swede is on course to win a staggering ninth league title in a decade **Profile by Paddy Agnew**

As footballing springtimes go, this one has followed the classic Zlatan Ibrahimovic script. Take his immense contribution to what looks sure to be a Milan title-winning season, add in a little controversy over two periods of Serie A suspension, top it all off with yet another Champions League disappointment and you begin to tell a very familiar story.

Unless Milan make a last-gasp mess of things, Ibrahimovic will pick up his ninth domestic league title with his fifth different club in 10 seasons. It will follow on from league title wins at Ajax (2002 and 2004), Juventus (2005 and 2006), Internazionale (2007, 2008 and 2009) and Barcelona (2010). Even allowing for the fact that Juventus were stripped of their two titles in the wake of the *Calciopoli* scandal, this is still some haul.

The 29-year-old Swede may well have his detractors. He has certainly been known to lose his cool. Likewise, he has had disappointing nights in key Champions League fixtures with his Italian clubs. Yet, in the heel of the hunt, here he is again, having played a crucial role in another (probable) league title success. This cannot be mere coincidence. Perhaps, when Jose Mourinho used to insist during his time at Inter that Ibrahimovic was the "best player in the world", maybe he was exaggerating only a little. Maybe he really meant it.

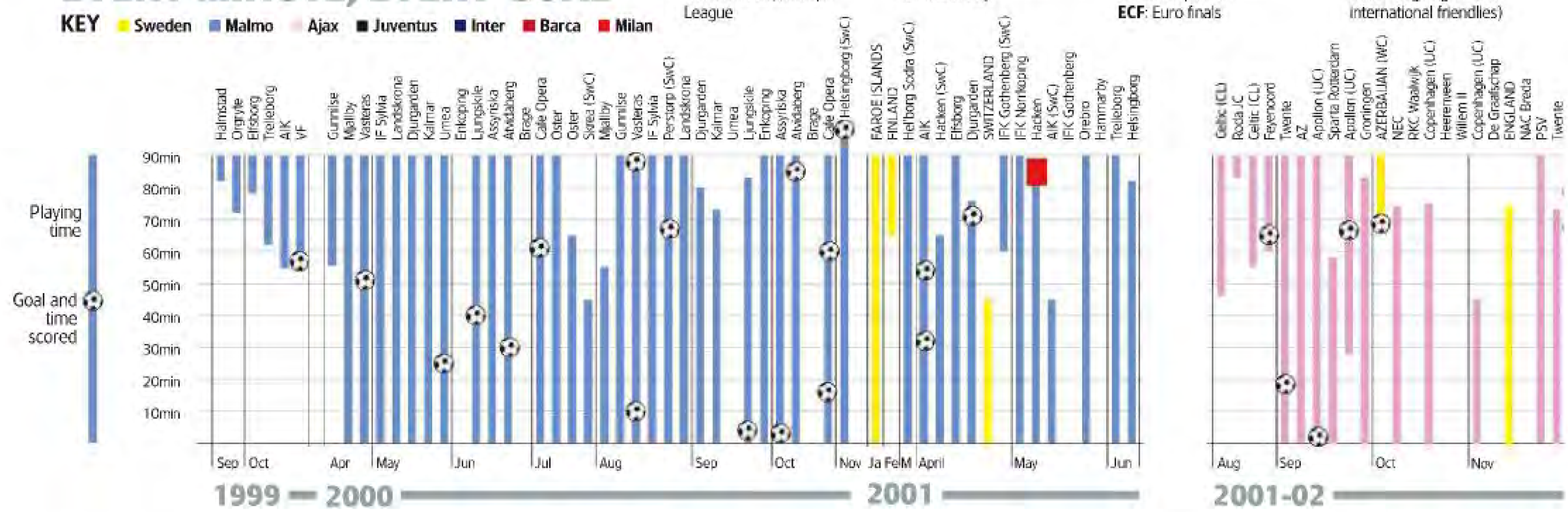
If a scriptwriter had come up with the story of the life and times of Ibrahimovic, he might well have been accused of

Shooting for the stars...Ibrahimovic seeks more glory in Milan's colours

## TIMELINE: EVERY MATCH, EVERY MINUTE, EVERY GOAL

**KEY** Sweden · Malmo · Ajax · Juventus · Inter · Barca · Milan

**SwC**: Swedish Cup
**US**: UEFA Super Cup
**CL**: Champions League
**UC**: UEFA Cup/Europa League
**SC**: Spanish Cup
**SS**: Spanish Super Cup
**CWC**: Club World Cup
**IC**: Italian Cup
**IS**: Italian Super Cup
**DC**: Dutch Cup
**DS**: Dutch Super Cup
**EC**: Euro qualifier
**ECF**: Euro finals
**WC**: World Cup qualifier
**WCF**: World Cup finals
(all other matches either league games or international friendlies)



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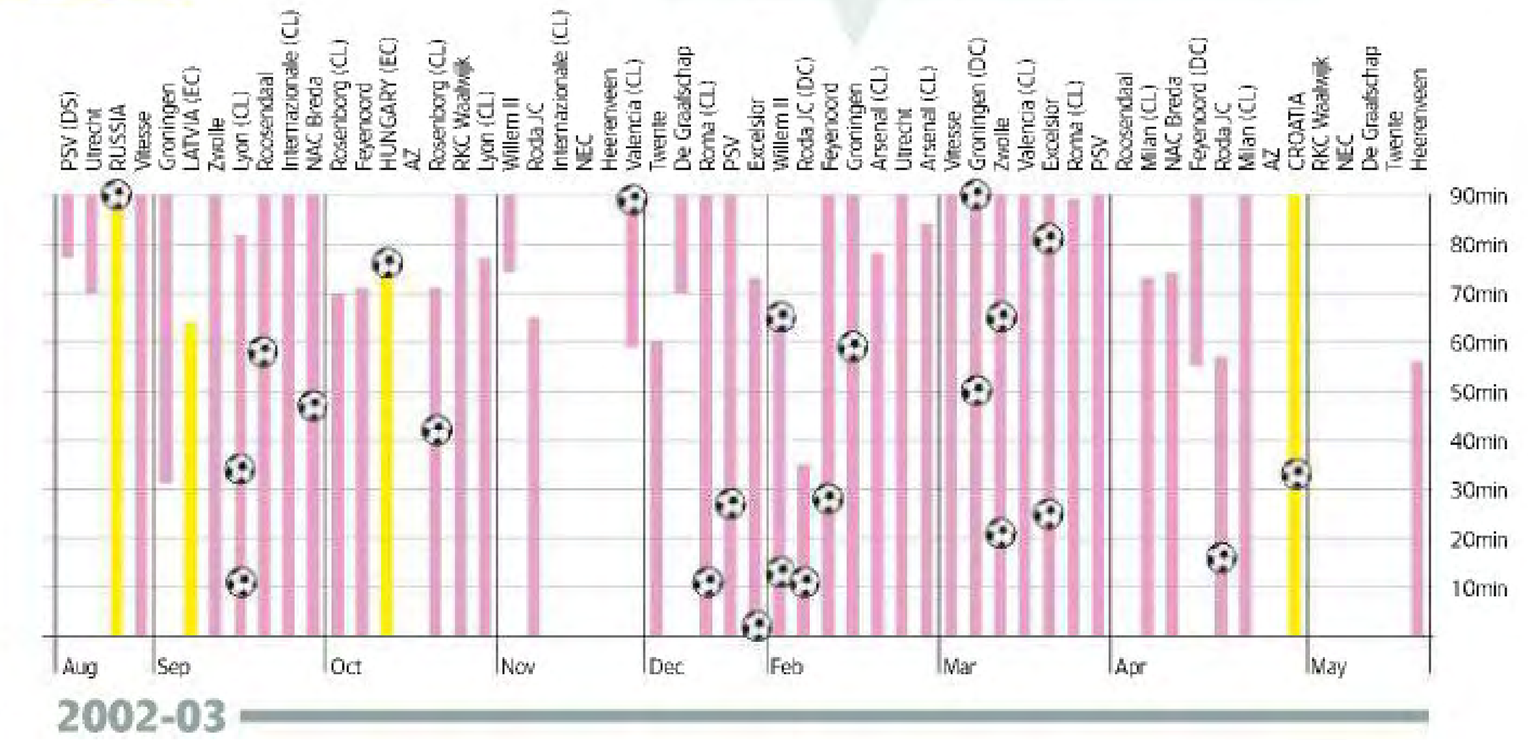
May 12, 2002 – scores a "golden goal" as Ajax beat Utrecht 3-2 to win the Dutch Cup Final and complete the double.

Feb 15, 2003 – scores his eighth goal in seven consecutive matches, either side of the winter break, in 2-1 win at home to Groningen.




2002-03

## FACT FILE

**Zlatan Ibrahimovic**

**Nationality**
Swedish

**Age**
29 (03.10.81)

**Place of birth**
Malmo, Sweden

**Height**
1.92m (6ft 4in)

**Position**
Forward

**Teams**
Malmo 1999-2001, Ajax 2001-2004, Juventus 2004-2006, Inter 2006-2009, Barcelona 2009-present, Milan (loan) 2010-11

**Honours**
**Ajax**
Dutch league 2002, 2004; Dutch Cup 2002; Dutch Super Cup 2003.
**Internazionale**
Italian league 2007, 2008, 2009. Italian Super Cup 2006, 2008.
**Barcelona**
Club World Cup 2009; UEFA Super Cup 2009; Spanish league 2010; Spanish Super Cup 2009, 2010.

over-indulging his politically correct fantasies. The son of a Croat mother and a Bosnian father who both emigrated to Sweden in the late 1970s, he grew up on the streets of Rosengard, near Malmo, a tough suburb home to immigrants from Turkey, the Balkans and eastern Europe.

With handyman Sefik for a father and cleaning lady Jurka for a mother, "Ibra" has defied all the odds, with his journey to international superstar reading like the triumphal but inevitable progress of a cartoon strip, a latter-day "Roy Of The Rovers". While there is nothing new about a "poor boy" achieving fame and riches through football, there is something intriguingly post-modern about Ibra's pedigree, namely that of a first generation Swede with origins in the bitter divisions of the former Yugoslavia.

However, that background has been the making of Ibrahimovic, both on and off the field. He is not your typical Swedish footballer. It is not just that his technical armoury contains a bag of outrageous tricks, ranging from impish backheels to imperious feints, it is also a question of attitude. Put simply, Ibra has always had a high opinion of himself.

### Gone his own way

A few years ago, one observer noted of Ibrahimovic that he pays no attention to the "law of Jante", a sort of Swedish code for living which has as its basic commandment: "Don't think you're better than us." Indeed, he has nearly always gone his own way, as illustrated by this post-match comment on an opponent: "I went left, he went left. I went right, he went right. I went left again, he went to buy a hot dog."

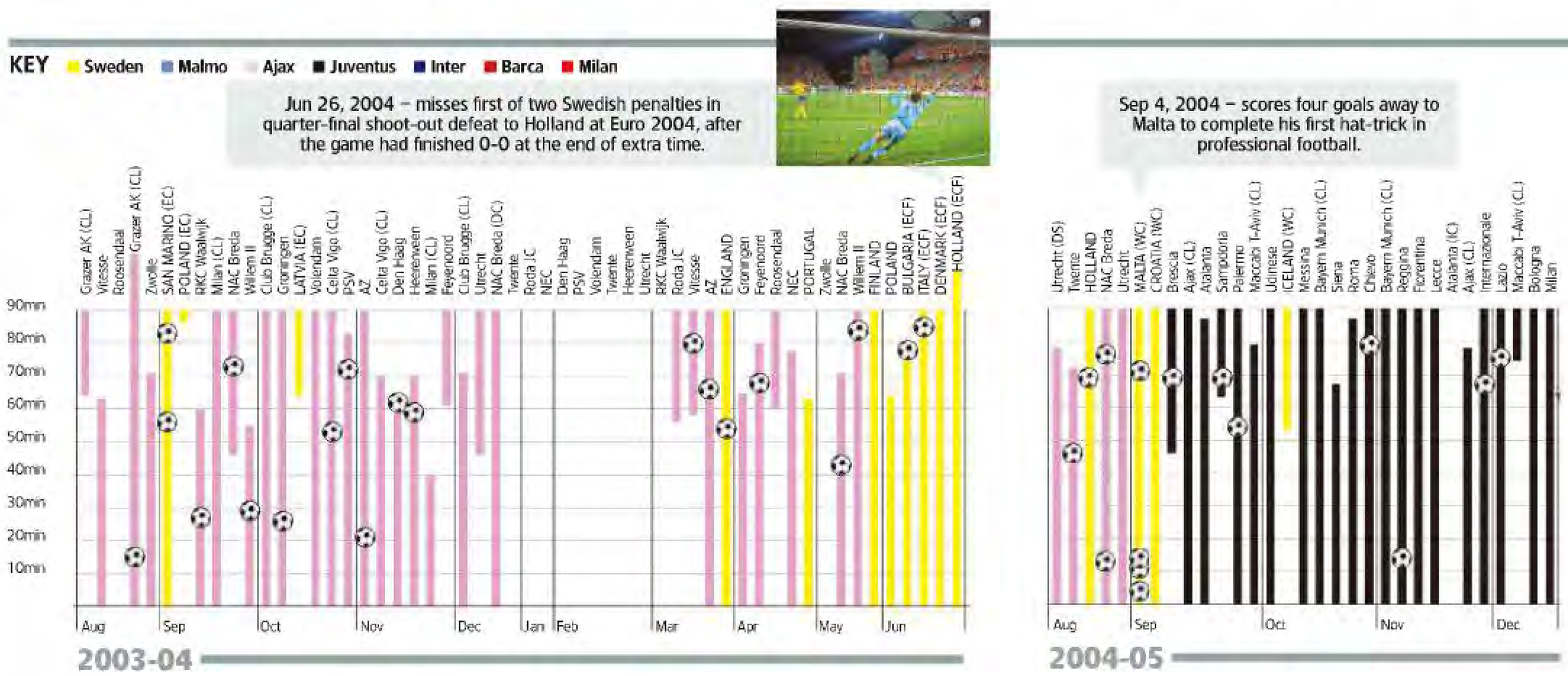
In more recent times, he remains famous in Italy for his brief and to-the-point comment on that May 2008 Sunday when Inter lifted the third of their five consecutive titles of the decade.

High fives...Ibrahimovic celebrates with Jose Mourinho – who once described him as the best player in the world – after scoring for Internazionale against Panathinaikos in the Champions League

Remember, that had been a season when, in the wake of a Champions League elimination by Liverpool, Inter had gone badly off the boil, seeing a one-time 11-point lead over Roma reduced to just one by the very last day of the season. On the final day, Inter were away to Parma and Roma were at Catania. Just to add a little spice, Roma took an eighth-minute lead thanks to Montenegrin striker Mirko Vucinic. For all of 54 minutes Roma were the "virtual" champions. That is, until five minutes into the second half, when coach Roberto Mancini called Ibra off the bench.

It was a gamble since Ibra had not played for nearly two months, having hurt his knee at the end of March. Yet, as he had done for much of the season, he proved himself the match winner, scoring two superb goals. Pursued by the media as he came off the pitch, Ibra made a now celebrated and polemical quip: "You lot talk. I score goals."

That dramatic second-half substitution



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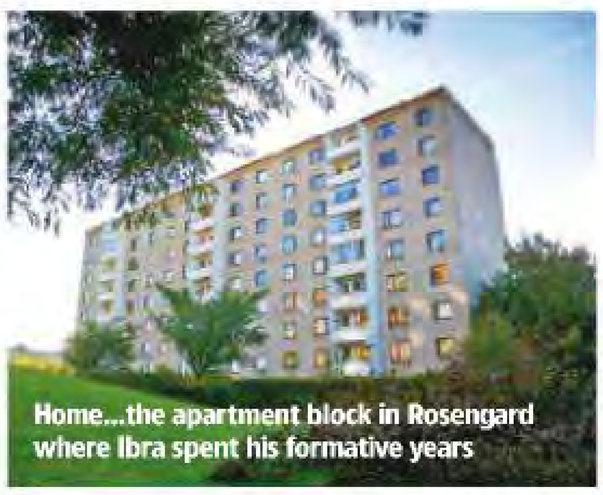
Dutch treat...a young Ibra hoists the championship trophy with Ajax in 2004



Home...the apartment block in Rosengard where Ibra spent his formative years

Farewell Malmo...Ibrahimovic waves to the fans on his last appearance before moving to Ajax

against Parma recalls a similar, if much less well-known, winning substitution involving Ibra. That came back in Malmo when his very first club, Balkan, were playing an under-12 derby against Vellinge, a club from a well-off middle-class area of the city.

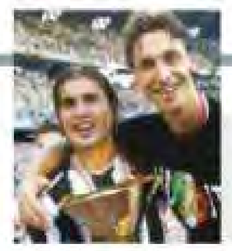
At half-time, with young Ibrahimovic on the bench, Balkan were trailing 4-0. Team coach Hasib Klicic, who had already spotted his talent and accordingly used to drop by the Ibrahimovic house to give him a lift to training, brought on Ibra for the second half. This was a good move since Balkan ended up winning the game 8-5, with Zlatan scoring all eight goals.

Those were childhood days when Ibrahimovic was, in the words of a former headmistress, "one of the most unruly pupils we have ever had". But football, was the saving of the boy.

He was obsessed with the game, spending hours on the playground and in the streets kicking a ball about. Nor was it his height which paved the way for him. Now a 6ft 4in forward who commands respect, in those under-12 days he was of average height.

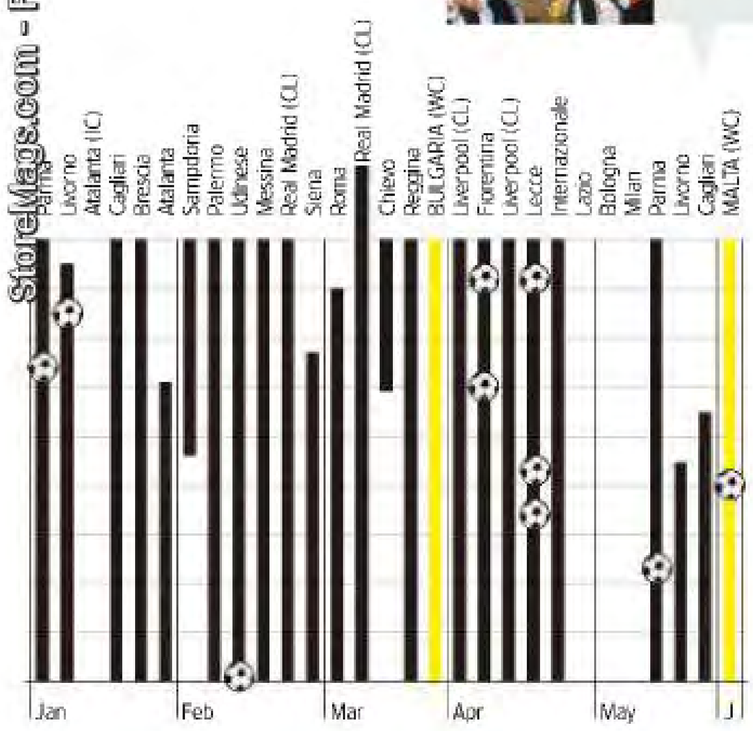
"You know, I wasn't a tall child. It all

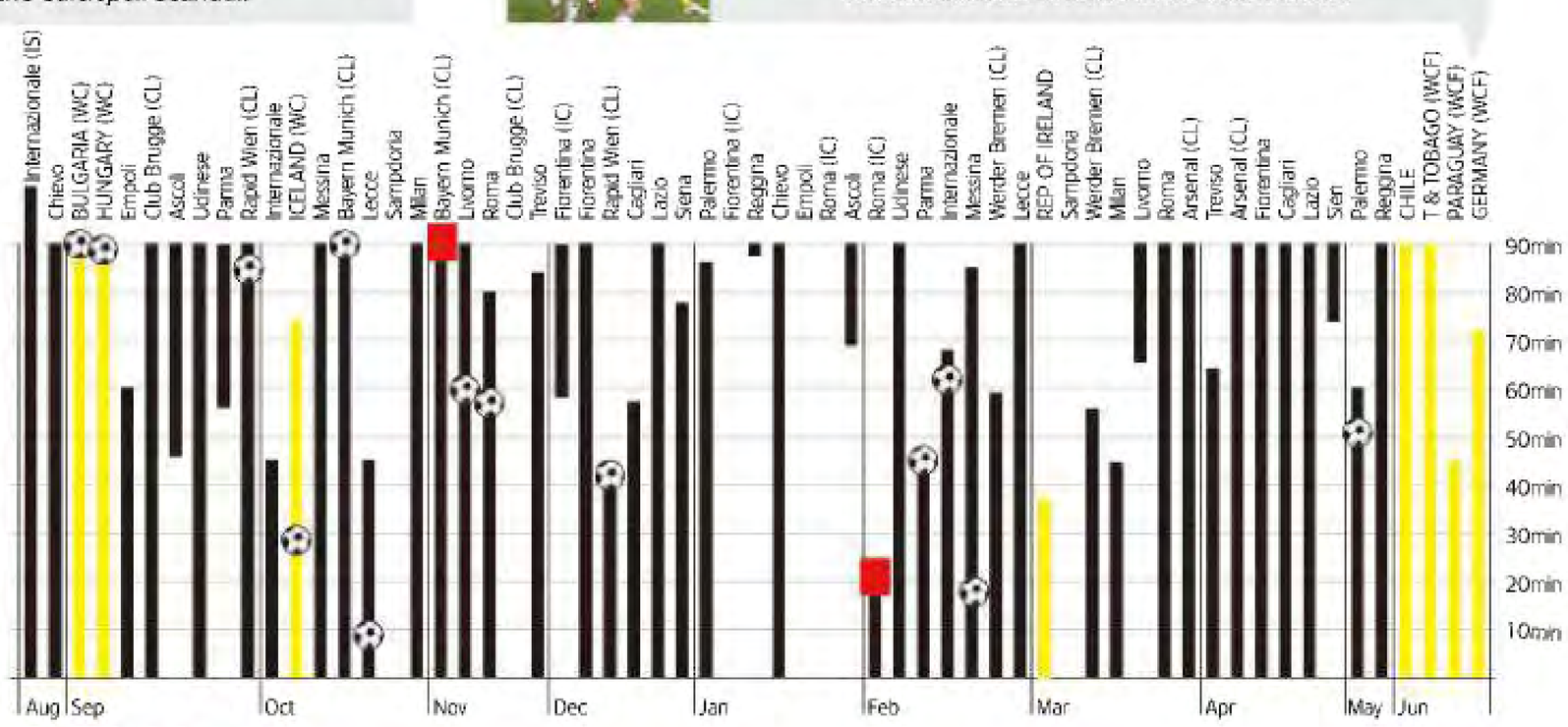
> **"You lot talk. I score goals"**
> **Ibrahimovic to the media after his two goals at Parma gave Internazionale the Italian title**



May 29, 2005 – celebrates the Serie A title which Juventus were later stripped following the *Calciopoli* scandal.

Jun 24, 2006 – Sweden's World Cup adventure comes to an end as they are eliminated in the round of 16 by hosts Germany. Ibrahimovic fails to score in the tournament.




2005-06

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Battle hardened... Ibrahimovic, in Juventus' colours, tangles with Inter's Walter Samuel

Fragile relationship...Ibrahimovic fell out with Pep Guardiola when he realised he would always have to play second fiddle to Lionel Messi at Barcelona

happened during the summer when I was 16 years old.

"I came back from my holidays and I had grown 13 centimetres. At school, they hardly recognized me", Ibra once recalled to *Gazzetta dello Sport*.

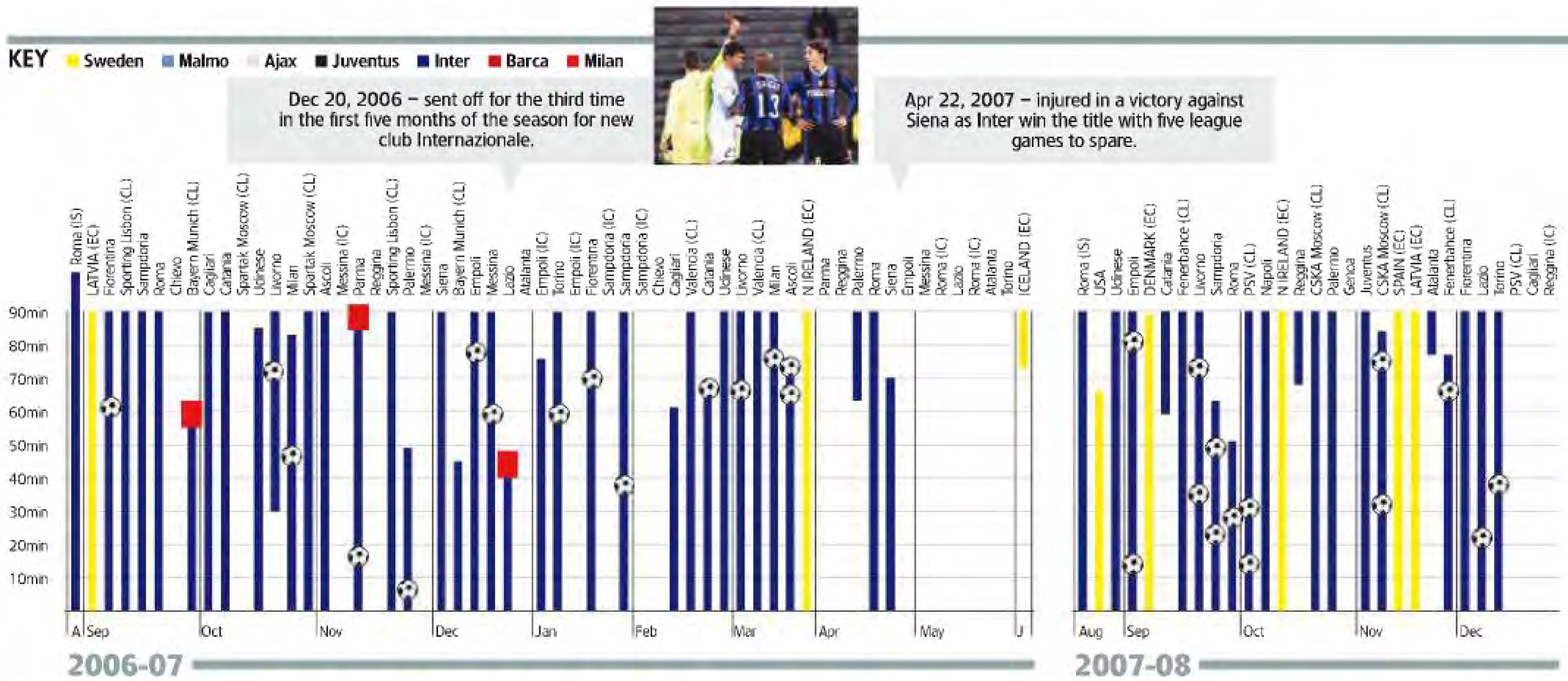
He was, in the words of coach Klicic, quite clearly "an extraordinary talent, a natural talent". So much so that he signed his first professional contract with Malmo in 1996, at the age of 15, progressing through to the first team within three years. He was still a very raw talent in those days, more a "streetballer" than a "field footballer". Niclas Kindvall, one of his Malmo team-mates, recalls him as someone who always shot and passed "at the wrong moment" but someone who, nonetheless, "had it all".

Soon word was out about an interesting young player at Malmo. Arsenal were reportedly keen but in the end, in March 2001, he joined Ajax for £4.9million. At Ajax, they still remember this gangly lad in the ghetto uniform of hooded top, beanie and giant watch.

They soon discovered that, as one writer noted, he was "slow, didn't know where to run, seldom bothered scoring and, despite standing 1.92metres tall, couldn't head".

Those were days when, not surprisingly, he took a deal of stick from the Ajax fans. Furthermore, he continued to be something of a ghetto player, with no problems about throwing his weight around and punching the odd defender.

Ajax official David Endt noticed something that was, and is, fundamental to Ibrahimovic, observing: "Suspicion plays a big role with him. You see it in his game: that he won't be screwed by someone



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I'm just champion...Ibrahimovic, flanked by Inter team-mates Maicon and Javier Zanetti, celebrates winning the Scudetto in 2008

else, but he'll screw you."

People such as Swedish football writer Jennifer Wegerup, who follows Ibra closely today, confirm that this trait, the tendency to paranoia, remains part of his psyche. He is someone who believes that, because of his ethnic background, he has had to work twice as hard as others to achieve success. Wegerup suggests that his enduring suspicion that somebody might be "out there to get me" partly explains his often polemical relationships with the media and fellow professionals.

One Swedish colleague, who prefers to remain anonymous, recalls the day that he and a TV crew travelled to Turin to interview Ibrahimovic. The player was not willing to do the interview, but he opted to make his point in a bad-tempered, arrogant manner, in the process almost running over the TV crew in the parking lot after training. These days this particular journalist declines any assignment to interview Ibrahimovic.

> "You see it in his game...he won't be screwed by anyone but he'll screw you"
> **Ajax official David Endt**

While tensions with the media are totally normal (indeed sometimes justified) in the case of a "star" player, Ibra has also had his "misunderstandings" with fellow players. When he left Ajax for Juventus in August 2004, he did so against the background of allegations that he had deliberately injured Ajax team-mate Rafael Van der Vaart during a Sweden-Holland friendly that month. Tensions between the two players were so bad that club officials summoned them both, only for Ibra to say to them: "I'm not playing with that guy." Within days, Ibra was on his way to Juventus.

### Broke curfew

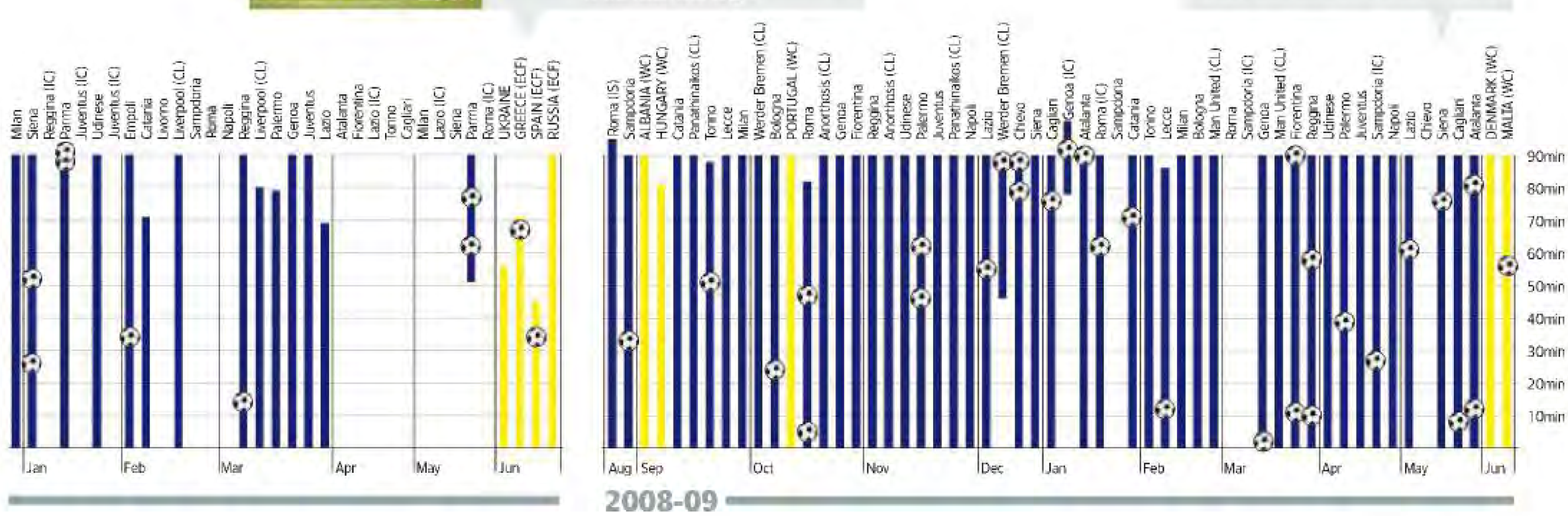
Ibra has also had his problems with the Sweden national team. Along with Christian Wilhelmsson and Olof Mellberg, he broke the squad curfew during a training camp before a Euro qualifier against Liechtenstein in 2006. Out until 1.15am, all three were sent home even though they claimed they had not been drinking. Typically, Ibrahimovic felt the punishment was unjust and by way of protest refused to return to the squad for the next games against Iceland, Spain and Egypt.

It is at least arguable, too, that tensions or perhaps jealousies led to his departure from Barcelona last summer after just one season with the Catalan club. Close observers of the Barca scene suggest that Ibra's relationship with coach Pep Guardiola began to deteriorate from the moment he realised that the Catalan, not surprisingly, tended to consider a certain Lionel Messi as his number one, "build the team around him" man. In the end, even though he scored 16 league goals for Barca, Ibrahimovic still left on something of a down note.

Wegerup says that nearly all of that

Jun 14, 2008 – scores in Euro 2008 group defeat to Spain but Sweden fail to progress to the knockout stage.

May 17, 2009 – Inter defeat Siena to secure their third Serie A title in a row.




2008-09

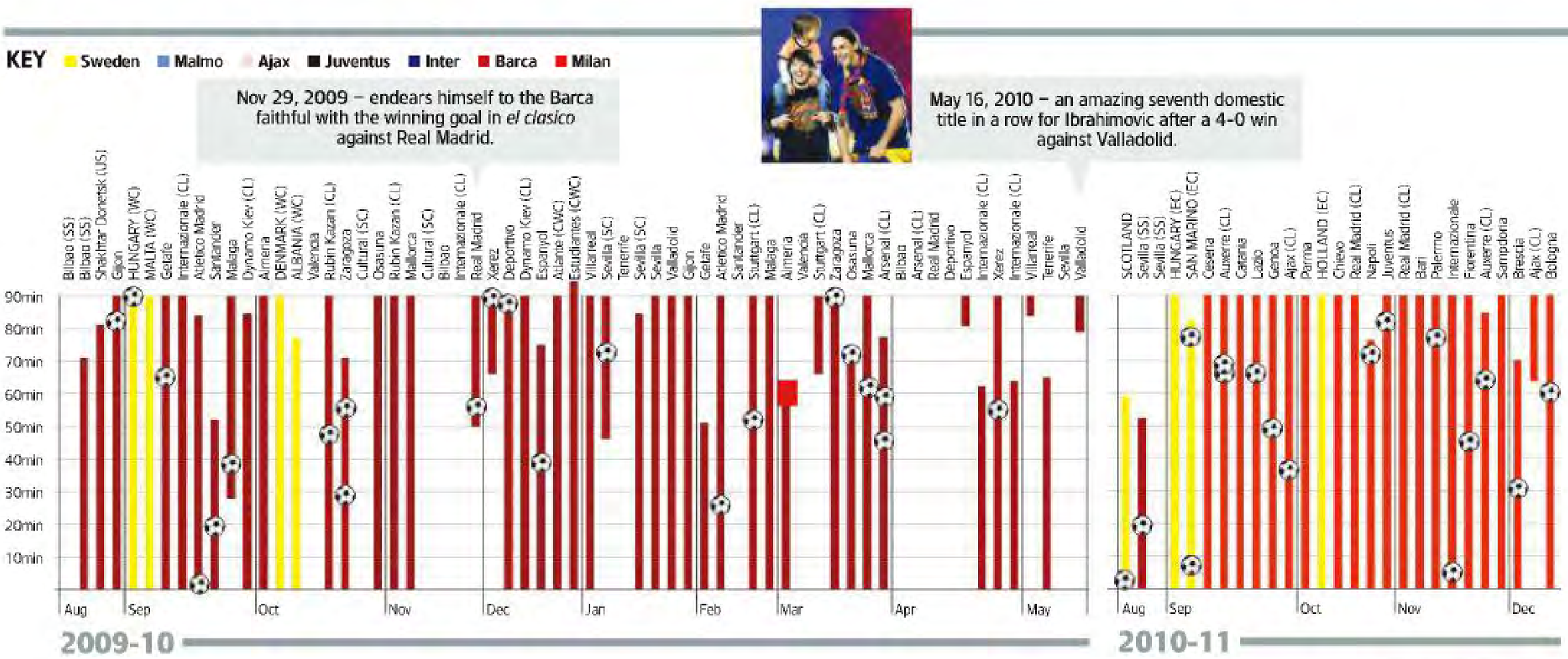
unruly behaviour is now behind Ibrahimovic. In a stable relationship with Helena Seger, a woman 11 years older with whom he has two children (five-year-old Maximilian and three-year-old Vincent), today's Ibrahimovic is arguably a more mature man. These days, he is the Sweden team captain, while up at Milanello the Milan folk describe him as a "100 per cent professional" who gives no problems.

Not for nothing, Milan director Adriano Galliani recently pronounced the club as more than happy with Ibra's season, while coach Massimiliano Allegri has gone on record to say that this has been Ibra's "best ever" season as a football professional. Those comments were made by way of deflection of criticism aimed at Ibrahimovic for managing to pick up two consecutive bans this spring, which saw him miss out on key matches such as the Milan derby in the final seasonal run-in.

**His unruly behaviour is behind him. In a stable relationship and with two children, he is arguably more mature**

Even Milan owner, prime minister Silvio Berlusconi, was allegedly upset by the swearing incident which saw him sent off against Fiorentina, the game which marked his comeback following an earlier two-match ban. Significantly, the

Red for danger...Ibrahimovic is sent off by referee Christian Brighi during Milan's league game with Bari



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**Number one fans...Ibrahimovic's partner Helena Seger and children Maximilian and Vincent**

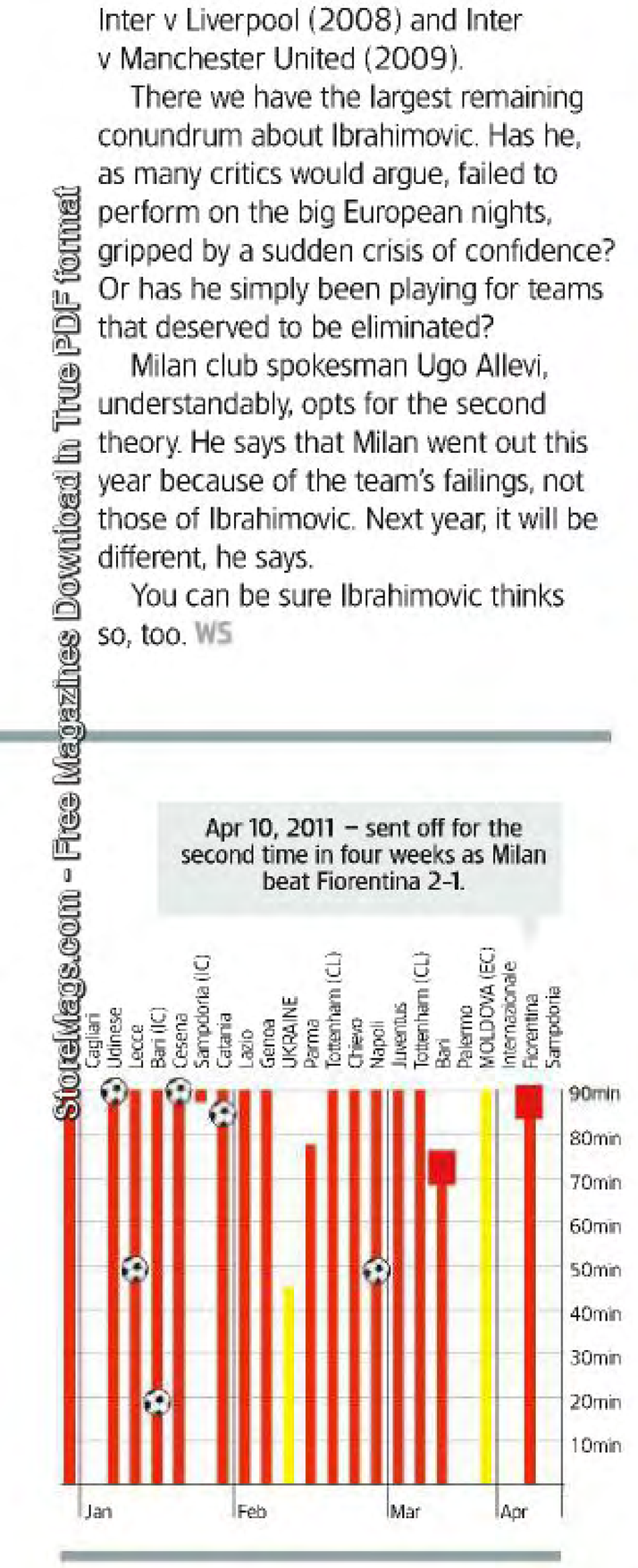
club moved quickly to deny the comments attributed to Berlusconi.

Milan are confident that Ibra will remain with them next season, thus giving himself a great chance to lay the one bogey that seems to have dogged his career, namely the Champions League. When the *Rossoneri* limped out of the Champions League this season, eliminated in the first knockout round by Tottenham Hotspur, it was just the latest of a long line of European disappointments for Ibra following in the steps of Juventus v Liverpool (2005), Inter v Valencia (2007), Inter v Liverpool (2008) and Inter v Manchester United (2009).

There we have the largest remaining conundrum about Ibrahimovic. Has he, as many critics would argue, failed to perform on the big European nights, gripped by a sudden crisis of confidence? Or has he simply been playing for teams that deserved to be eliminated?

Milan club spokesman Ugo Allevi, understandably, opts for the second theory. He says that Milan went out this year because of the team's failings, not those of Ibrahimovic. Next year, it will be different, he says.

You can be sure Ibrahimovic thinks so, too. WS




**Star jump...Ibrahimovic hails his finishing power after scoring for Milan against Lazio**

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# Overlapping is the norm

Attacking full-backs have become an essential weapon in the Champions League, says Jonathan Wilson

"Suddenly, a bloke comes dashing through and he's had a shot at goal and the ball went wide," said the Arsenal full-back Laurie Scott, describing his side's 5-1 win over Fluminense on their tour of Brazil in 1949. "And we started looking around to see who we'd got to blame for this. We couldn't find it. We found out it was their full-back. See, they didn't care. I never went up there like that."

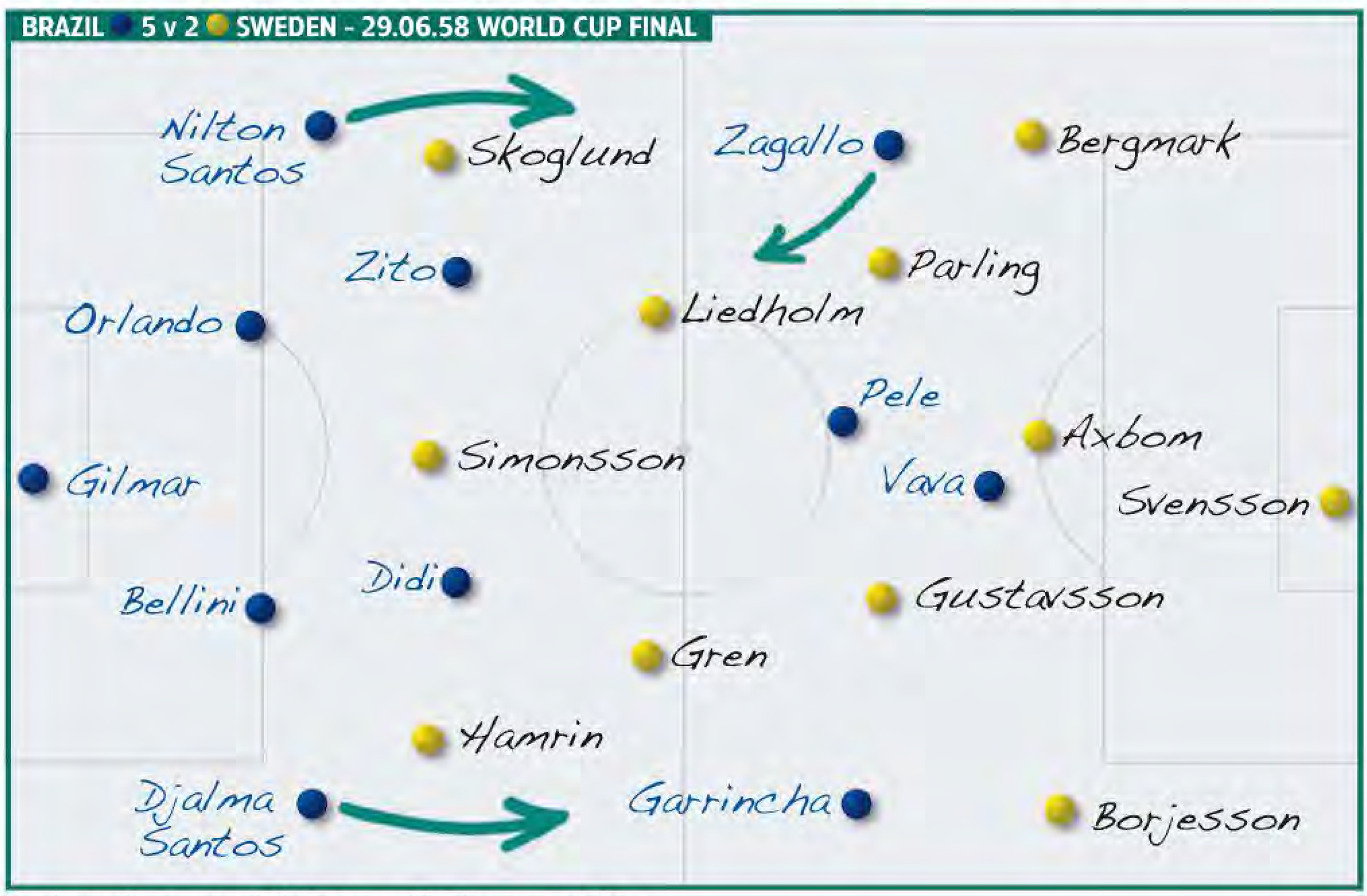
Nine years later, the rest of the world was just as bemused by Brazil's attacking full-backs, with the surges of Djalma Santos and Nilton Santos presenting an attacking threat from deep that opponents struggled to counter. But cause and effect are hard to disentangle. Did the full-backs start to advance because the shift to 4-2-4 left space in front of them, or did 4-2-4 develop in part because the full-backs had an attacking bent and so the lack of midfield width was not an issue? The truth is that it was probably a combination of the two.

Six decades on from Brazil's first World Cup triumph and full-backs continue to provide an attacking threat. Look at the Champions League quarter-finalists: Barcelona had Dani Alves and Adriano, Maxwell or Eric Abidal; Real Madrid had Sergio Ramos and Marcelo; Manchester United had Rafael and Patrice Evra; Chelsea had Jose Bosingwa and Ashley Cole; Schalke had Atsuto Uchida and Hans Sarpei; Shakhtar Donetsk had Dario Srna and Razvan Rat; Internazionale had Maicon and Yuto Nagatomo.

**Brazil's full-backs Djalma Santos (above) and Nilton Santos presented an attacking threat from deep that opponents struggled to counter**

They may not always have played both, but seven of the eight had the capacity to play attacking players in the full-back positions. Only Tottenham Hotspur stood apart, playing an orthodox 4-4-2 (or 4-4-1-1) with attacking wingers. With the wide midfielders more aggressive, their full-backs have a more defensive role.

It was Jack Charlton, a far more astute tactical thinker than he is often considered, who observed after the 1994 World Cup that the full-back had become the most tactically important position in football. He was talking specifically about




Attacking threat from deep...Brazil's full-backs were difficult for opponents to pick up



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**Too narrow...Inter's 4-3-1-2 allowed Schalke's full-backs too much space down the flanks**

the fact that when two 4-4-2s met, the tendency was for centre-backs to pick up centre-forwards while the midfield fours cancelled each other out. The only players who consistently had time on the ball and space in front of them were full-backs.

Full-backs have become increasingly attacking since then. The 3-5-2 may have gone out of fashion, but the wing-back has not in the sense that all full-backs are wing-backs now. In South America the term "lateral" has long been used for the full-back, a description that gives an impression of width, but not depth. The rest of the world has seemingly accepted the notion of the full-back as somebody who patrols the entirety of the flank.

Certain modern formations, for instance, are predicated on the notion of the full-back as the provider of attacking width. The 4-3-1-2 prevalent in Serie A this season – and still widely used in Argentina and Brazil – demands that the full-backs get forward or the game becomes very bogged down in the centre.

The 4-3-2-1 in which Carlo Ancelotti arranged Chelsea in the second leg of their Champions League quarter-final at Manchester United demanded that the full-backs, Ashley Cole and Branislav Ivanovic, get forward.

Perhaps most intriguing, though, is the modern vogue for 4-3-3 with inverted wingers, as practised by Manchester City, Real Madrid and Barcelona. Using the wide forward on the "wrong" side – that is, a left footer on the right and a right footer on the left – can create a highly fluid front three, two of whom are attacking on diagonals. There seems an odd aversion to the sight of forwards operating wide, but as Alex Ferguson explained, defending his use of Wayne Rooney on the left, there is a clear logic behind it.

> **Inter's inability to cope with full-back's like Atsuto Uchida of Schalke hurt them in Europe this season**

"It's funny when I see centre-forwards starting off in the middle against their markers and then going away from goal," said Ferguson. "Strikers going inside are far more dangerous, I think.

"When [Thierry] Henry played as a striker, and sometimes when Wayne [Rooney] does, they try to escape and create space by drifting from the centre to wide positions, when that actually makes them less dangerous."

For a back four to deal with three forwards, the outer two of whom are angling their runs inward, is relatively simple. One centre-back picks up the centre-forward and the full-backs play narrow, blocking the inside-run of the wide forwards and trying to force them to go on the outside on their weaker foot. There's even a spare centre-back to help pick up midfield runners and mop up any loose balls.

With an overlapping full-back, though, the full-back can't play too narrow because to do so leaves the inverted winger with the option of an easy pass outside. If the full-back shuffles over to block a possible pass it opens up space for the winger to cut infield onto his stronger foot.

So universal are attacking full-backs that sides who fail to counter them are suffering, which is part of the reason both for the failure of Italian sides in Europe this season and for Park Ji-Sung's consistent use in Champions League games for Manchester United. He may not be the most technically accomplished of players, but he is supremely industrious.

Jack Charlton was right: the aggressive full-backs who were baffling observers in the 1950s remain so effective now that they have become all but a default at the highest level. WS

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Facetoface

FRANZ BECKENBAUER

# "It's hard to compete with Sepp, he's an institution"

The only man to both captain and coach his country to World Cup victory steps down from the FIFA executive committee in May

**Before you made your decision to step down from the executive committee, many people were predicting you would be the natural successor to Sepp Blatter as FIFA president. When did you decide not to challenge?**
Actually it was never an option. The truth is I never gave serious thought to the FIFA presidency. It's a full-time job. I could have become UEFA president after the 2006 World Cup. Lennart Johansson wanted me to succeed him, to close the circle if you like, after coming up through the ranks and achieving so much as a player and manager. I thought about it but only for a short time before I said no. I'd have had to move the family and I couldn't do it. I guess people thought that, because of my career progression, FIFA president was the natural way for me to go, but I wanted to say "stop" before the final line, if you like, and go back to the family. I have two small kids; honestly that's the only reason I'm stopping now. What other reasons would there be to leave something like the FIFA ExCo? It's the government of football.

**When you look back, how has football changed since you were a player and then a coach?**
Actually not that much, though obviously it has become more professional with a lot more money involved. Betting is certainly a problem, but I don't think it's that serious. It can be controlled by FIFA and UEFA.

**Some say you are giving up out of disgust at the way the ballot for the 2018 and 2022 World Cups was conducted. Is there any truth in this?**
Well, it wasn't a reason, but it's true I wasn't happy. Perhaps it would be fairer and more democratic in future for the whole FIFA family, all 208 members, to be involved in the decision for future World Cup hosts.

**Your last involvement as a member of the FIFA ExCo will be to vote for either Sepp Blatter or Mohamed Bin Hammam. Is it true you are uncomfortable about the election?**
There are always two ways of looking at things. Competition is healthy, but I can only go by experience. At the congress in Seoul in 2002, at the election between Sepp Blatter and Issa Hayatou, it was a total disaster, the atmosphere was terrible. It wasn't good for football. I just hope both candidates are sporting enough and that the process will be conducted fairly.

**Who do you think will win?**
Mohamed has been a member of the ExCo for a long time and has loads of experience. When he said he intended to run for the presidency, he would have given it serious thought.

**Does he have a chance?**
I'm not sure because Sepp *is* FIFA. Metaphorically speaking, he unlocks in the morning and locks up at night. But he's 75 and there are questions about how long he is able to do the job. Mohamed is 15 years younger, but it's hard to compete with Sepp because he's an institution. Remember, Lennart Johansson and Issa Hayatou had been a long time in football and they both lost. People say four terms is too much, but I'm not sure about that, provided Sepp is mentally and physically fit. Look at [Joao] Havelange. He was a great president and was considerably older than Sepp.

**But isn't it fair to say FIFA has lost credibility because of recent events?**
Sure, we got criticised because of some decisions which were difficult to understand. What I will say is this: is it logical that the same ExCo members who voted for 2018 and 2022 are still around when the next World Cup hosts are decided? It's a question which needs to be considered.

**What kind of changes would you like to see in the game in, say, the next five to 10 years?**
Actually I wouldn't change too much. And certainly not goal-line technology, please. Everyone seems to be yelling for this, but how many instances do you actually get? I'm in favour of the two additional referees. I am chairman of both the FIFA and UEFA football committees, and I can tell you that in both committees we are of the same opinion. Why? Because goal-line technology only covers the ball crossing the line. What about the rest of the penalty area? Would Thierry Henry's infamous handball against Ireland have been spotted with goal-line technology? No. Would it have been spotted with two additional officials? Absolutely. I'd even prefer a video system to Hawk-eye or a chip in the ball, but that's for another time.

**Will you miss being involved with FIFA?**
Of course, but I realise my family needs me more. Plus, I can return to some of my hobbies like mountain walking – not climbing, I hasten to add – and of course golf. I have enough to do with my TV work and my sponsors which I will continue. Also, most importantly of all – apart from my family – is my foundation, the Franz Beckenbauer Foundation for handicapped people. I can do much more for them now.

**Finally, will you ever get back to playing off a seven golf handicap?**
God, no! I haven't played since October last year. It's impossible for me to get back to seven. I'm not getting any younger and in golf you have to have a good swing and a supple body to turn. At a certain age that's not possible. I could probably get to playing off 12 these days. Of course I'll start playing again – but not in the same hysterical way I used to!

***Interview by Andrew Warshaw***

## On Lionel Messi...

"Technically, Messi is incredible, probably on a par with Maradona already, though for me Pele will always be the best. Would Messi have been the same player in my day? Now that's a good question. In the 60s and 70s the game was much rougher. If Messi had come up against a specialist like Berti Vogts he would have been destroyed. It's lucky for him that he is playing when he is!"

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Facetoface

ROBERT PROSINECKI

# "Coaching Red Star is a big, big challenge"

A European Cup winner as a player with Red Star Belgrade in 1991, the Croatian returned to coach the Serbian side in December last year

**You have had a few months to assess the Red Star squad. What do you make of it?**
Basically I am happy, but we'll see what happens. With football everything is possible – which is what makes it such an interesting sport.

**What are your goals for the club?**
I think that Red Star is one of the biggest clubs in Serbia and Red Star must always achieve good results. Of course, I cannot promise we will finish first – no coach could do that at any club – but we will do everything we can.

**Do you have a clear philosophy on how football should be played?**
We have a great tradition here and I aim to play an attacking game, to be dominant. Our game must always be based on that. You can't hope to attack the goal, to make chances, to make things happen, without control of the ball. That's normal. The fans expect it and it's normal they should expect it. In Montenegro [during the mid-season break] we worked well, especially in terms of fitness. There were one or two technical things, so the players won't have an easy job because some things have been changed. But I hope we can show the benefit of those changes.

**What are the changes you have made?**
I will give you a very simple example. In the first half of the season we played a different system. I insist on 4-3-3, which they did not play up until now. That is the system I would like to play, but sometimes you cannot play in that way if you don't have the right players. However, I do believe that at this stage we do have quality players who can play 4-3-3.

**Why do you prefer to play 4-3-3?**
I think the best teams that ever played used 4-3-3. Look at Barcelona. I think it's impossible that a team ever played like Barcelona before. I don't think there are any of us when we watch Barcelona who don't like to see such a game. All of us want to watch them. They are dominant in every game. Of course, Inter beat them with Mourinho, but generally they win. It is, of course, very difficult to play like this, but we are keen to try. In home games, at the Marakana, we have to dominate, make our fans happy and win. But we want to win and also play in a good way

**Was your love of 4-3-3 inspired by your time playing at Barcelona?**
From the time of Cruyff. For a long period they have picked the type of players who can play this way and that's how it was in my time there. They can afford to buy these players, of course, and by playing this way they create a great opportunity to play attacking football.

**Pep Guardiola, a former team-mate, has carried Johan Cruyff's philosophy into his own coaching career at Barcelona. Have you had much contact with him since you became a coach?**
He is my friend. I played two years together with him at Barcelona. I talked to him about this because he's a true child of Barcelona. He said he'd had good luck to have great players who could play this way and they'd had good luck to take players of that quality from their own youth ranks, who knew how to play that way. Of course, it's not only luck, it's long years of work to develop that sort of player.

**What lessons can you learn from your time as a Red Star player? Did the change of coach, from Dragoslav Sekularac to Ljupko Petrovic, make a difference to the 1990-91 season?**
Ljupko Petrovic brought something new, some new spirit. He instilled in us that we had quality, that we could do something. He made us believe and he made us more assertive in a sporting sense. He persuaded us we could achieve big things. One of the most important aspects of a coach is not only to get the tactics right, to choose 4-4-2 or 4-3-3, but to make the players believe they are capable of achieving something. Ljupko Petrovic did that and, with the exception of that final game [against Marseille in the 1991 European Cup Final] when we were more cautious, we were usually the dominant team that season. We won the league, were unlucky runners-up in the [Yugoslav] Cup and won the European Cup. Even after many players left we won the World Club Cup Final in Japan.

**One of the cliches of football is that you should never go back. Is it a risk for you to go back to Red Star?**
I think it's a good cliche, it makes sense, but there are some differences. I'm not coming back as a player, I'm back as a coach. It's a big change, of course, and coaching Red Star is a big, big challenge. I'm very keen. My time here as a player is a big burden in a way, but I will try to do something positive as a coach. If it's good that I come back or not, only time will tell.

**Were you actively seeking a job in coaching or did you feel you had to answer Red Star's call?**
I wanted to come back, but I had a moral obligation to talk it over with my family. I wanted to make my career as a coach and thought carefully about it, and then came this offer. I know this club very well, which is a big advantage. I worked here for four years as a player, so it is not something new. I know some old players around the club and the fans remember me.

***Interview by Jonathan Wilson***

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## On Croatia coach Slaven Bilic...

"We played together for many years, but he didn't take me [as his assistant] because I was a good mate to have coffee with. Maybe we did that as well, but he had good reasons for taking me with him to the national team. Slaven is an exceptional coach"

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Reaching for the stars...Lille midfielder Hazard (no26) celebrates with his team-mates after scoring against Marseille

# ClubFocus

## LILLE

# Northern spirit

After spending years as a yo-yo club, Lille have been challenging for their first French league title since 1954. **Howard Johnson reports**

Lyon have, without doubt, been the most successful French team of the millennium, while Paris Saint-Germain and Marseille remain the country's most high-profile clubs by a long chalk. And yet it's a small provincial outfit from the unfashionable north, a club that only regained its top-flight status as recently as 2000, that many are tipping to be the dominant French footballing force of this decade.

Lille – or Lille Olympique Sporting Club (LOSC) to give the club its full name – have been setting the pace in Ligue 1 and could go all the way and land their first championship for more than 50 years.

Coach Rudi Garcia – a former Lille player himself – has created a team that

**LILLE'S LEAGUE FINISHES** 1954-2010

**CUP SUCCESSES SINCE '54**
1955 French Cup
2004 Intertoto Cup

Ligue 1
Ligue 2
Championnat de France amateur

In 1969 the club reverted to amateur status. A year later they were promoted back to Ligue 2 by the French Football Federation and the Ligue de Football Professional

*as of April 26, 2011

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Box of tricks...Gervinho (right) keeps the ball away from Toulouse's Daniel Congre

Lille sandwich...Debuchy (left) and Cabaye block out Karim Ait-Fana of Montpellier

> "If we can capture one of the top three spots it will have definitely been an excellent season"
> **Lille coach Rudi Garcia**

is solid at the back, competitive and creative in equal measure in midfield, and razor sharp in attack. And if the overriding spirit is one of collective investment, Garcia still isn't afraid of giving players their head and allowing them to shine.

Belgian *wunderkind* Eden Hazard, perhaps Europe's most coveted young player, is capable of making jaws drop with his precocious skills and ability to score spectacular goals. Senegalese striker Moussa Sow tops the French goalscoring charts and it's easy to see why, given the 25-year-old's strength, athleticism and poacher's instincts. And Ivory Coast attacker Gervinho has the tricks and flicks to keep the fans excited, while retaining the end product to ensure that his coach doesn't tear strips off him.

The most open French title race in years has seen Lille get their noses in front and it would be just reward for a club built on solid principles if they were to finally get their hands on the Ligue 1 trophy – not that Garcia is getting ahead of himself.

"I always like to do better than the previous season, and we've finished fifth and fourth in my first two years in charge," he says. "If we can manage to capture one of the top-three spots then it will definitely have been an excellent season."

Today's Lille is a relatively young club, having been founded as recently as September 1944 when two clubs from different parts of town, Olympique Lillois and Sporting Club Fivois, opted to join forces. The former had known some significant successes, not least winning

## THE POWER CURVE
### The key figures behind Lille

**MICHEL SEYDOUX**
Having made his name in film financing, he took over as president in April 2002 and has overseen a major improvement in the club's fortunes on the field, as well as the hugely important new stadium project.

**JEAN-MICHEL VANDAMME**
Former Lille player who is Seydoux's sporting advisor. Runs the club's highly-rated academy.

**FREDERIC PAQUET**
Joint managing director and sporting director whose role is the "internal and external development" of the company, in both sporting and business terms.

**RUDI GARCIA**
Lille's first-team coach has been identified as one of France's most exciting managerial prospects by none other than 1998 World Cup-winning boss Aime Jacquet.

**REYNALD BERGHE**
Financial director who ensures LOSC operate within the strict fiscal conditions that the government has imposed on its pro clubs for the past 20 years.

**JEAN-LUC BUISINE**
Ex-Lille player and erstwhile agent in charge of recruitment since 2003, bringing in Peter Odemwingie, Michel Bastos and Kader Keita.

**AURELIEN DELESPIERRE**
Communications manager who will be important linchpin in the near future, spreading the Lille message in the hope of filling the new stadium.

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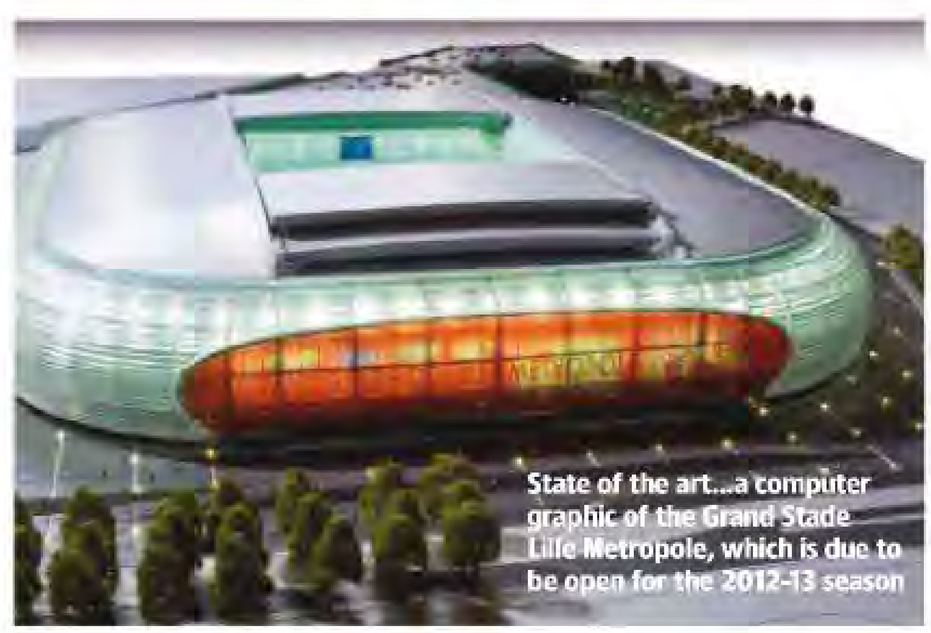

State of the art...a computer graphic of the Grand Stade Lille Metropole, which is due to be open for the 2012-13 season

On guard...mounted police before a Lille-PSG game

Loyal...Lille fans (above left) get behind the team

the first French professional football championship in 1933, and with a solid base of talented players behind them the early history of LOSC was glorious. In the first 10 years Lille won two league titles and five French Cups. Yet despite such on-the-field success, the club had trouble balancing the books. The local council put its hand in its pocket on numerous occasions, but it was to no avail as LOSC yo-yoed between the first and second divisions. Things reached a nadir in 1969 when Lille dropped into the third tier and gave up their professional status.

The council came to the rescue once again in 1980, taking over the club before it was privatised in 1999 when businessmen Luc Dayan and Francis Graille promised to invest and take things forward.

Under Bosnian coach Vahid Halilhodzic, Lille took the 1999-2000 Ligue 2 season by storm, winning the title and gaining promotion with an enormous 16-point gap over second-place Guingamp. But even greater success was to follow when Halilhodzic led the club to a third-place finish in their first season back with the big boys and a place in the 2001-02 Champions League qualifying round.

To the outsider it might have looked like Lady Luck had picked Lille to succeed for the most capricious of reasons – but not according to Dayan, who claims: "Everything that happened in those early days of the rejuvenation of the club had been planned out beforehand. Our primary objective was to get the team up to standard and to develop the club's infrastructure."

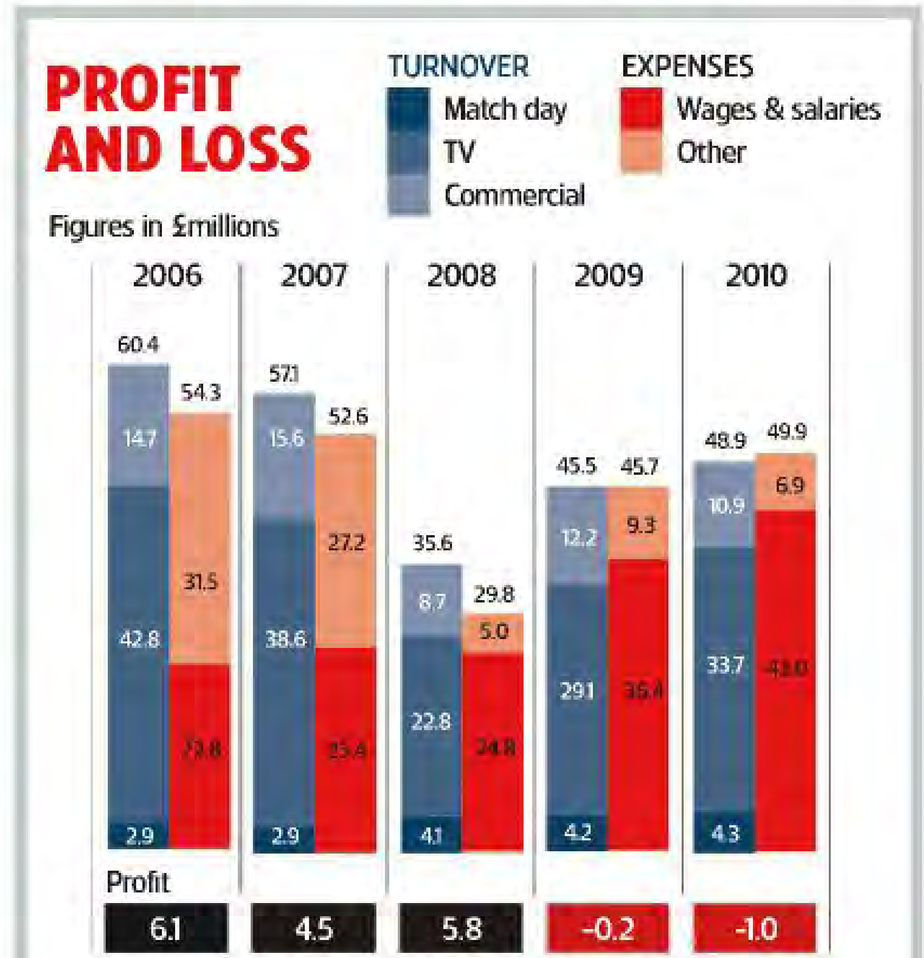
While the ascent to Champions League status thrust the club into the media spotlight, especially when Lille qualified for the group stages at the expense of Italians Parma, things were changing quickly behind the scenes too. If anything, growth had been too quick and suddenly Dayan and Graille found themselves out of their depth financially.

## Financial muscle

It was a case of having to take one step back to take two forward. Michel Seydoux offered greater financial muscle in his new role as president, but spending still needed to be brought under control for the club to progress in an orderly fashion. Halilhodzic's team was broken up and a new coach, Claude Puel, installed. With a budget reduced from £35million to just £22m – the second smallest in Ligue 1 – and with star players sold, it was down to Puel to rebuild from the ground up. The project wasn't about to happen overnight and it took two difficult seasons on the pitch before Puel's new team finished second in 2005 and third in 2006.

Construction off the field, meanwhile, had also been high on the agenda at LOSC. The Stade Grimonprez-Jooris didn't meet UEFA standards and, after much haggling, Seydoux and the local council agreed that the ground should be renovated rather than building a new stadium, which was the original intention. The project was given the green light and work should have been completed by the end of 2004, with the club moving to another ground, the Stadium Nord Lille Metropole athletics complex in nearby Villeneuve-d'Ascq while the work was being carried out.

As it transpired, political shenanigans meant that the building permit was revoked at the last minute and Lille




**WEALTH CHECK: AGAINST THE GRAIN**

Last season, Lille made a modest £1million loss on turnover of £48.9m, with revenue down in recent years compared to 2007, when the club competed in the Champions League. While the rest of French football struggles to break even, Lille can look forward to a brighter future. Qualification for the Champions League group stages will bring increased TV and sponsorship revenue, as well as prize money from UEFA. In addition, the planned move to the new 50,000-capacity stadium will further increase potential earnings.

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were left in limbo. It was only in 2008 – and with Lille still playing their home games at Stadium Nord – that an agreement was finally reached to build a new, 50,000-seater stadium, the Grand Stade Lille Metropole, also in Villeneuve-d'Ascq. The state-of-the-art complex is due to be unveiled in time for the start of the 2012-13 season.

### Playing stability

Against such a backdrop of uncertainty and political intrigue, it's nothing short of incredible that Lille have managed to remain so robust on the field. Much of this is down to the stability that Seydoux has been able to bring to the playing side. Since 2000 Lille have had just three head coaches – Halilhodzic, Puel (who left for Lyon in 2008) and current boss Garcia – in comparison to PSG who have got through seven and Marseille's staggering 13 in the same time.

Three Champions League and two UEFA Cup/Europa League qualifications in the last 10 seasons prove that the policy has paid tremendous dividends for a club that has none of the resources of PSG or OM. European competition revenues have clearly helped to keep the club on a sound financial footing and the projected annual additional revenue of £17.5m once the Grand Stade comes online should see Lille in rude fiscal health for the foreseeable future.

With UEFA's Financial Fairplay regulations due to be introduced at the start of next season, together with the stipulation that UEFA-licensed clubs must start breaking even by 2014, Lille's stadium revenue boost, together with the club's prudent wage structure, could prove to be a winning formula.

"Our new stadium will allow us to move to another economic dimension," says Garcia. "When we're there we'll have the means to battle it out a bit more often with the league's big teams."

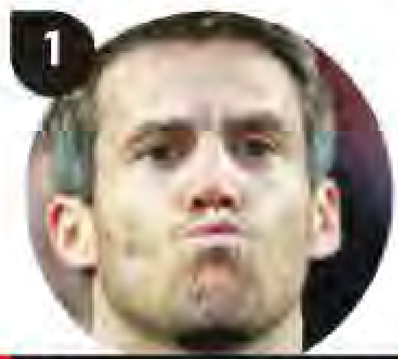
For now, though, Lille fans won't be thinking about anything except winning the league this season. And it would be a fitting tribute to departing national team centre-half Adil Rami, who moves to Valencia next season, if *Les Dogues* (the mastiffs) could land the title.

Rami sums up the spirit of this ambitious yet homely club perfectly. Never picked up by any professional club's academy, he was working as an odd-job man for his local council in Frejus and playing at amateur level when spotted by Lille in 2007. Rami signed his first pro contract just three-and-a-half years ago, is now a first choice for Laurent Blanc's national side and could pocket a league winner's medal come the end of May.

As fairy tales go, it takes some beating. But that's what Lille Olympique Sporting Club is all about: dreaming big and making them come true. WS

## THE SQUAD

### GOALKEEPERS



**Mickael LANDREAU**

**Age 31 (14.05.79)**
Experienced France international who joined Lille from Paris Saint-Germain in June 2009 and made his 500th Ligue 1 appearance in February. Has just extended his contract until June 2014.

**Barel MOUKO (Con)**

**Age 32 (05.04.79)**
Made 128 appearances for Dijon between 2004 and 2008, the majority under current Lille boss Garcia. Followed his mentor in 2009 as cover when Landreau was injured.

### DEFENDERS

**Franck BERIA**

**Age 27 (23.05.83)**
Originally earmarked as a potential right-back, but can perform equally well on the left or in central defence. Of Madagascan descent, he joined Lille from Metz in 2007 and is closing in on 150 appearances for the club.

**Aurelien CHEDJOU (Cam)**

**Age 25 (20.06.85)**
The Cameroon international is the first-choice central defensive partner for Rami. Joined Lille in 2007 after four years wandering around the lower reaches of French football. First capped by his country in 2009.

**Mathieu DEBUCHY**

**Age 25 (28.07.85)**
A fearless right-back of whom former coach Claude Puel once said: "He sticks his head where others wouldn't put their feet." A one-club man, having first worn a Lille shirt aged eight. Made his senior debut in 2003.

### MIDFIELDERS

**Florent BALMONT**

**Age 31 (02.02.80)**
Despite standing just 5ft 6in, this tough-tackling central midfielder has had a decade at the top in France playing for Lyon, Toulouse and Nice before joining Lille in June 2008. Forms a formidable midfield trio alongside Mavuba and Cabaye.

**Yohan CABAYE**

**Age 25 (14.01.86)**
A one-club man who has made over 200 appearances in seven seasons of first-team action. The former France Under-21 skipper made his full international debut in Laurent Blanc's first match, against Norway in August last year.

**Stephane DUMONT**

**Age 28 (06.09.82)**
A reliable midfielder and another one-club man who has had his problems with injury over the course of his eight seasons with *Les Dogues*. These long lay-offs have stopped him from becoming a regular fixture in the first team.

### FORWARDS

**Pierre-Alain FRAU**

**Age 31 (15.04.80)**
A much-travelled veteran who joined Lille in January of 2008 after a disappointing time with Paris Saint-Germain. Appears to have rediscovered some of his old goalscoring form in the last two campaigns with *Les Dogues*.

**GERVINHO (IvC)**

**Age 23 (27.05.87)**
Highly rated wideman who started out in Belgium before moving to France with Le Mans, then joining Lille in 2009. Has attracted the attention of numerous big clubs – as well as the police: he was given a 15-month suspended sentence last November for driving without a licence.

**Moussa SOW (Sen)**

**Age 25 (19.01.86)**
Born in France to Senegalese parents, he joined Lille from Rennes for the start of the current season and has been a goalscoring revelation. Quick, strong and ice cool in front of goal. Played for France Under-21s but opted to represent Senegal at senior level.

Home kit

Second kit

Third kit

## THE COACH

### Rudi GARCIA

**Age 47 (20.02.64)**
A former midfielder with the club between 1982 and 1986, his professional coaching career began with Saint-Etienne, followed by spells with Dijon and Le Mans before arriving at Lille in June 2008, when Claude Puel left for Lyon. After leading the club into the Europa League he was surprisingly sacked at the beginning of June 2009, only to be reinstated just over two weeks later, with the director who had taken the decision given his marching orders instead. Has not looked back since.

### EMERSON (Bra)

**Age 25 (23.02.86)**
This left-sided central defender from Sao Paulo joined Lille in January 2007 and had the dubious privilege of being sent off just eight minutes into his debut against Marseille. A dependable player, but no longer an automatic first choice.

### Adil RAMI

**Age 25 (27.12.85)**
Classy central defender who joined Lille from amateurs Frejus aged 21, having never even been part of a professional academy. Now a regular for France, he signed for Valencia in January but was loaned back for the rest of this season.

### David ROZEHNAL (CzR)

**Age 30 (05.07.80)**
The much-travelled Czech Republic central defender arrived at Lille on a year-long loan from Hamburg in June last year, making LOSC his seventh professional club. Spent two seasons with Paris Saint-Germain between 2005 and 2007.

### Jerry VANDAM

**Age 22 (08.12.88)**
Home-town boy who was converted from a defensive midfielder into a right-back. Made his debut for the club at 19 but has yet to establish himself as a regular.

### Idrissa Gana GUEYE (Sen)

**Age 21 (26.09.89)**
A defensive midfielder who made his first-team debut in the French Cup against Colmar in January 2010. Most memorable moment to date came when he scored with a superb drive against PSV Eindhoven in this year's Europa League.

### Eden HAZARD

**Age 20 (07.01.91)**
Jewel in the Lille crown, he has talent in abundance and is supposedly on the shopping list of all of Europe's footballing giants. Quick brain, quick feet and the ability to score world-class goals.

### Rio MAVUBA

**Age 27 (08.03.84)**
Born in Angola and with a father who played for Zaire, this defensive midfielder is both club captain and an indispensable force. Capped by France at senior level, he personally funds an orphanage in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

### Ludovic OBRANIAK (Pol)

**Age 26 (10.11.84)**
Despite representing Poland, this attacking midfielder was born in France and has spent his entire career in the country, first with Metz and then Lille since 2007. Lost his starting place to Hazard and may well move at the end of the season.

### TULIO DE MELO (Bra)

**Age 26 (31.01.85)**
In his third season with Lille after making his name with Le Mans, he has found himself squeezed out of the attacking limelight by Sow and Gervinho, but still retains a poacher's instinct for goals.

### Omar WADE (Sen)

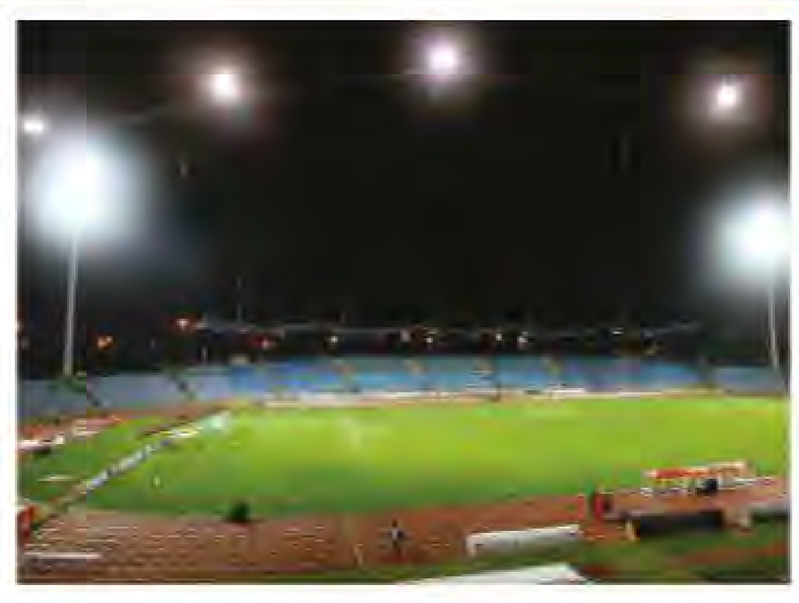
**Age 20 (15.05.90)**
Regarded as a decent prospect after being brought to the club 18 months ago, he has only been glimpsed off the bench on a couple of occasions so far this season.

## THE STADIUM

### STADIUM NORD LILLE METROPOLE

Situated outside Lille, in Villeneuve-d'Ascq, LOSC have been using this 18,185-capacity stadium since 2004, when plans were in place to renovate the club's own Stade Grimonprez-Jooris arena. However, when this idea fell through, Lille were obliged to stay put in a ground that was primarily designed for athletics while they waited for a brand new 50,000-capacity ground to be built.

The Grand Stade Lille Metropole, also situated at Villeneuve-d'Ascq, is due to be opened in July 2012.



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# Talentscout

## ALEXANDER MERKEL

| | |
|---|---|
| **COUNTRY** | Germany |
| **CLUB** | Milan (Ita) |
| **POSITION** | Midfielder |
| **AGE** | 19 (22.02.92) |
| **PREVIOUS CLUB** | Stuttgart |

He may share the same surname with his country's leader, but while German chancellor Angela Merkel struggles in the opinion polls, young attacking midfielder Alexander Merkel is fast rising in the popularity stakes after breaking into Milan's heavily guarded inner sanctum – otherwise known as the first team.

Merkel was just 16 when he was lured away from Stuttgart's junior squad in the summer of 2008. Two years later, he played a pivotal role in the Milan side that won the Italian Under-20 Championship – their first success in the tournament for 25 years – but even that was not enough for him to feature in the club's official team photo for the current campaign.

However, three appearances for the senior side in the pre-season Emirates Cup in London not only revealed a precocious talent but also indicated that Merkel was very much in the thoughts of coach Massimiliano Allegri.

As injuries began to take their toll on the *Rossoneri*'s ageing midfield during the early months of the season, Merkel was finally given his competitive debut, appearing as a substitute in a Champions League tie at home to Ajax in December.

Other big-time opportunities soon followed. In his first Serie A start, against Cagliari in January, his patient probing, energy and calmness under pressure were there for all to see. Two weeks later, in an Italian Cup encounter with Bari, he was even more conspicuous, scoring one and making another in a 3-0 win.

Cool, unfazed and focused, Merkel is that rare Milan species: the youth-team kid made good. For many years, the *Rossoneri* way has been to sign established, big-star names rather than giving a chance to the fruits of their extensive academy system. But financial realities are finally prompting a change in the club's priorities, a fact underlined when vice-president Adriano Galliani recently praised both Merkel and another San Siro young gun, fellow midfielder Rodney Strasser.

"It's been quite a while since we had youth-team players getting promoted to the first team and scoring," said Galliani. "This season both Merkel and Strasser have done it, and it's very encouraging from our perspective. The pair are very important to our future."

Merkel's successful ascent and apparent maturity may come as a surprise to some of the coaches who worked with him at Stuttgart. Several questioned the youngster's attitude and he was once suspended from training for a fortnight because of poor results in the classroom.

However, despite initially struggling to settle in his new surroundings, the midfielder has knuckled down, thankful for his chance with one of Europe's leading clubs.

"In my early days at Milan I was homesick and thought of going back home," admits the Germany youth international. "I have my father to thank for advising me to stick with it. He was right.

"To achieve things in life, you have to get through the difficult times. I want to stay at this club for as long as I can and the only way to do that is by working hard and listening to my coaches and guys like Clarence Seedorf, who has really helped me a lot.

"For me, Serie A is stronger than the Bundesliga. Football in Italy is better technically and this league has more experienced stars. It's harder to break through here and stay at the top."

Born in the Kazakhstan province of Almaty to Russian parents of German lineage, Merkel was six when his family emigrated to Germany. Technically, he can hitch himself to any one of three national teams but, despite reports that he was considering playing for Russia, Merkel insists he only has eyes for the *Nationalmannschaft*, who he has represented from Under-15 level up to Under-19.

The last time Milan had a blonde German in their side, libero Karl-Heinz Schnellinger ruled supreme for nine trophy-filled years. Merkel can only hope that a similar destiny is in store for him.

***Nick Bidwell***

> "To achieve things in life, you have to get through the difficult times"
> Alexander Merkel

## Luuk DE JONG

| | |
|---|---|
| **COUNTRY** | Holland |
| **CLUB** | Twente |
| **AGE** | 20 (27.08.90) |
| **PREVIOUS CLUB** | De Graafschap |
| **INTERNATIONAL DEBUT** | February 2011, v Austria |
| **INTERNATIONAL CAPS** | 1 (0 goals) |
| **HONOURS** | 2010 Eredivisie |

A player knows his career is on the up when even opponents ennoble him. Dubbed "King Luuk" by the PA announcer before a game away to Excelsior, Twente's De Jong has turned into a majestic prospect over the past 12 months.

Signed from De Graafschap in the summer of 2009, he was used mainly as a sub in his first season at Twente, contributing two goals in 12 appearances as the club clinched their first league title. But what a different story it has been this term, with De Jong establishing himself as a regular starter under new coach Michel Preud'homme.

> "Either up front or slightly deeper, he's the best in the country in an attacking-third category"
> **Twente assistant coach Alfred Schreuder**

The younger brother of Ajax midfielder Siem De Jong, Luuk has much of the old-style British centre-forward about him: the extraordinary strength in the air, the robustness, the athleticism and the bristling determination to come out on top in head-to-head duels with defenders. Not that he is all clenched fist, though.

He has worked hard to smooth off his technical rough edges and hone his possession play, and on several ocassions this season he has performed just as well in an attacking midfield role.

"Either up front or slightly deeper, he's the best in the country in an attacking-third category," enthuses Twente assistant coach Alfred Schreuder. "He's a really impressive performer at the moment, but the bonus is that he has so much more potential to tap. He can add value to more or less every aspect of his game. Above all else I'm looking for him to be more clinical in the danger zone, to be cuter."

Born in Switzerland to parents who were on a pro volleyball tour, the family later returned to Holland, and after the Van der Kerkhofs (Rene and Willy), Muhrens (Gerrie and Arnold), Witschges (Rob and Richard) and De Boers (Frank and Ronald), the country now has another set of brothers in their national team, Siem winning his first cap last August and Luuk following suit this February.

"Both Luuk and Siem showed outstanding qualities when I had them under my wing at De Graafschap," says the club's former youth-team coach Win Van Zeist. "Siem was the more refined on the ball. Luuk was explosive and a top-class header of the ball.

"I've rarely seen anyone time his leaps so well as him."

***Nick Bidwell***

## Stefan SAVIC

| | |
|---|---|
| **COUNTRY** | Montenegro |
| **CLUB** | Partizan Belgrade (Ser) |
| **POSITION** | Defender |
| **AGE** | 20 (08.01.91) |
| **PREVIOUS CLUBS** | Brskovo, BSK Borca (Ser) |
| **INTERNATIONAL DEBUT** | August 2010, v Northern Ireland |
| **INTERNATIONAL CAPS** | 5 (0 goals) |
| **LINKED WITH** | Shakhtar Donetsk, Milan, Roma, Bayern Munich, Arsenal |

When Montenegro first stepped out on the international stage four years ago, everyone could see the attacking potential of the national team but there were big question marks about the quality of their defence. Clean sheets in their last seven games – including their first four Euro 2012 qualifiers – have clearly put an end to that argument.

Much of the credit for this must go to defenders Marko Basa of Lokomotiv Moscow and Spartak Nalchik's Miodrag Dzudovic, but the run has also coincided with the introduction of Stefan Savic.

Having begun his career with local club Brskovo in Montenegro's third Division, Savic moved at the age of 17 to BSK Borca, a small club on the outskirts of Belgrade, and helped them to win promotion to the Serbian top flight in 2009. His performances earned him recognition with Montenegro Under-21s, a 10-day trial at Arsenal and a move to Serbian champions Partizan Belgrade.

An impressive debut in the Champions League away to Shakhtar Donetsk this season reportedly brought in a bid of £6.75million from the Ukrainians, not to mention promotion to the Montenegro senior side.

> Savic impresses with solid technique and a calm maturity

Apart from the usual attributes of being strong in the air and good in the tackle, Savic also impresses with solid technique and a calm maturity, something that can only have been enhanced by playing alongside 37-year-old former Serbia international Mladen Krstajic in the centre of the Partizan defence.

"It's safer and easier with him, as his experience and quality is a big help for us younger players," says Savic, who refuses to let the talk of a big-money move distract him. "Right now I'm interested only in Partizan and in winning trophies.

"I would like to leave a mark in the black-and-white shirt, to win the double, to celebrate it with our fans and then to have another go at the Champions League."

**Vladimir Novak**

## FIVE TO FOLLOW

### UDINESE'S FOREIGN LEGION

BY NICK BIDWELL

### Kwadwo ASAMOAH (Gha)

**AGE** 22 (09.12.88) **POSITION** Midfielder

**Thought of in his homeland as the heir apparent to former national icon Abedi Pele, he was first brought to Europe by Swiss side Bellinzona and is a guarantee of left-footed artistry, high energy and plenty of assists. Played in every one of Ghana's games at the 2010 World Cup finals.**

### Mehdi BENATIA (Mor)

**AGE** 24 (17.04.87) **POSITION** Midfielder

**A good friend of Arsenal and France midfielder Samir Nasri, the gangling Paris-born centre-back attended the French national academy at Clairefontaine, but got no higher than Marseille reserves and second-tier sides Tours and Clermont before moving to Serie A last summer.**

### Mauricio ISLA (Chl)

**AGE** 22 (12.06.88) **POSITION** Midfielder

**In his fourth season of Serie A football after moving from the youth ranks of top Chilean club Universidad Catolica. His dynamism and stamina have played a huge part in the development of Udinese into arguably the most potent counter-attacking force in Italy. A self-confessed Milan fan.**

### Alexis SANCHEZ (Chl)

**AGE** 22 (19.12.88) **POSITION** Forward

**Scoring goals left, right and centre, and constantly tormenting defenders with his speed and dribbling ability, the Chilean second striker looks every inch a future superstar and has very much lived up to the *"El Nino Maravilla"* (the wonderful kid) nickname he was given as a teenager at the Cobreloa club.**

### Cristian ZAPATA (Col)

**AGE** 24 (30.09.86) **POSITION** Defender

**Bought at 19 for £350,000 from Deportivo Cali, the central defender or right-back is now one of the emotional leaders of the *"Bianconeri"*, combining physical power, athleticism and strength in the air. Deserves special praise for his year-on-year technical improvement.**

# LEANDRO DAMIAO

| | |
|---|---|
| **COUNTRY** | Brazil |
| **CLUB** | Internacional |
| **POSITION** | Forward |
| **AGE** | 21 (22.07.89) |
| **PREVIOUS CLUBS** | Atletico Ibirama, XV de Outubro, Marcilio Dias, Cidade Azul, Atletico Ibirama |
| **INTERNATIONAL DEBUT** | March 2011, v Scotland |
| **INTERNATIONAL CAPS** | 1 (0 goals) |
| **HONOURS** | 2010 Libertadores Cup |

One towering header flicked the bar and another flew just the wrong side of the near post as Brazil's newest centre-forward narrowly failed to get his country career off to a scoring start in the March friendly against Scotland in London.

Yet as recently as December, Leandro Damiao was on the bench for Internacional in the Club World Cup and his chances of a regular game looked to be shrinking even further when the club signed experienced Argentinian striker Fernando Cavenaghi. However, a flow of goals has taken him from Internacional to international, and the promise shown on his debut has put him in the fight to be Brazil's first-choice front man.

But this is not the story of a Brazilian starlet marked out for glory in pre-pubescence. Four years ago, Leandro Damiao was playing low-grade amateur football as a midfielder in Sao Paulo and was rejected after a trial with a small club in the southern state of Santa Catarina. After he begged to be given a second chance, Atletico Ibirama president Ayres Marchetti was impressed, commenting: "He looked clumsy, with all that size, but I saw that he had strength of character."

> "Leandro Damiao belongs to a rare family of strikers that are hard to find in Brazil"
> **Brazil coach Mano Menezes**

Instead of midfield, the youngster was tried out up front and did enough to win a contract. For the next two years, with Atletico and several other minor clubs, he racked up the goals and attracted the attention of Internacional from Porto Alegre. First he was part of their reserve team, then he was promoted to the senior squad – where he made a brief but vital contribution to last year's Libertadores Cup triumph.

Before the second leg of the Final against Mexico's Guadalajara he was not even sure if he would be on the bench. In the event, he appeared in the second half with Inter nervously protecting a one-goal aggregate lead and made the title safe when he latched onto a Mexican mispass on the half-way line and charged forward to score with a cool finish.

It was an illustration that there is more to him than as a mere target man. It is true, though, that he owes his Brazil call-up to his size, with national coach Mano Menezes admitting: "Leandro Damiao belongs to a rare family of strikers that are hard to find in Brazilian football. You need the option of someone with his strength and penalty-area presence."

It was an injury to Alexandre Pato that opened the door for his international debut and, while Menezes has high hopes for Pato, the newcomer may be more suited to the coach's favoured 4-2-3-1 system. "The national team is another dimension," said Leandro Damiao after the Scotland game.

"I was sad not to score, but I felt good in the Brazil shirt and I want to keep it."

***Tim Vickery***

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# Road to revolution

The new league format which was meant to lift Belgian football out of the doldrums has further polarised opinion in an already divided country. **Nick Bidwell reports**

Inevitably in a country that finds it mission impossible to form a durable government, and which is in real danger of splitting into Flemish and French-speaking camps, solidarity in Belgium is a rare commodity these days. And no field of activity produces as much divisiveness as the world of football, where warring factions are currently in hand-to-hand combat over the structure of the professional game.

In a bid to raise standards and make their "product" more attractive to fans and sponsors, the movers and shakers of the Belgian Pro League opted at the start of last season to reduce the number of top-flight clubs from 18 to 16, and to introduce three sets of spring play-offs to sift out the champions, European representatives and relegation victims.

However, the new format has gained little in the way of popular support and, with increasing numbers hostile to what they see as an overly complicated and

Sign of the times...Club Brugge, training for a Europa League game against Villarreal, could only finish bottom of their group

## BRIEFING

Short shrift...Standard Liege's Jan Polak meets Anderlecht's defence

### LEAGUE FORMAT

The Belgian top flight has two distinct phases: a classic championship with the 16 clubs playing each other home and away, then three sets of mini-leagues:

- The championship pool, which features the top-six from the initial campaign, each of whom carry forward half of their regular season points and play each other twice.
- The Europa League play-offs, where the teams placed seventh to 14th are split into two groups, with everyone starting on zero points. The pool winners then meet home and away for the right to face the fourth- or fifth-placed side in the Championship play-offs (dependant on the number of places available to Belgium and the identity of the domestic Cup winner) for a Europa League place.
- The relegation round-robin, which has the bottom two teams from the regular season facing each other five times. The 15th-placed side starts with three points and plays three games at



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home, while the bottom team begins on zero. The side with the least points is relegated, while the winner competes in the second-division promotion play-offs with three teams from that tier.

Belgium has two spots in the Champions League, with the top two from the championship play-offs entering the fray in the third qualifying round. Three Europa League berths are up for grabs for the third and fourth-placed teams in the championship play-offs, plus the winner of another play-off between the Europa League play-off winner and the team finishing fifth in the championship play-offs.

**MEDIA**

There are no daily sports papers, but both the national and regional press provide authoritative and detailed coverage of the game. Of the French-language fare, *Le Soir*, *La Derniere Heure* and *La Meuse* are good value as is the Flemish view in *Het Laatste Nieuws*, *Het Belang van Limburg* and *Gazet van Antwerpen*. The parochial point-scoring can become tedious at times, though in such a polarised country as this it has to be seen as going with the territory.

By far the best periodical is the weekly *Sport/Foot Magazine*, with its finger on the pulse of the game and strong opinions to boot.

**TELEVISION**

The rights to show live league games belong to the subscription TV arm of cable network Belgacom, available to some 90 per cent of Belgian homes. Terrestial-only viewers make do with highlights packages and magazines on Flemish channel VTM and French-speaking RTBF.



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**40.5**
percentage of the 74 clubs to have played in the Belgian top flight who no longer exist

**11,404**
average Pro League attendance this season

**95**
number of the 107 league titles that have been won by clubs from the cities of Antwerp, Bruges, Brussels and Liege

# THE CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY-OFF SIX...

## 1 ANDERLECHT

National champions 30 times and three-times winners in Europe (Cup-winners Cup in 1976 and 1978, and UEFA Cup in 1983), Sporting, as they are commonly known, are Belgium's most successful club. But prestige is not an access-all-areas pass, and since reaching the second round of the Champions League in 2000-01, they have been continental underachievers.

## 2 CLUB BRUGGE

The pride of Flanders and a club even opponents have a soft spot for, the *Blauw-Zwart* (blue-blacks) have remained true to their no-glamour credo of honest endeavour and team spirit for 120 years. After six frustrating years without a league title, an uneasy, edgy atmosphere prevails.

## 3 GENK

Coached by Franky Vercauteren, the Limburg club are very much on a roll and came within a whisker of displacing Anderlecht as regular-season top dogs. Formed in 1988 by the fusion of Waterschei - European Cup-winners Cup semi-finalists in 1982 - and Winterslag.

## 4 GENT

League runners-up last season and continuing on their merry way this term, with coach Francky Dury, an ex-police inspector, just as influential as his predecessor Michel Preud'homme. Nicknamed *De Buffalos* thanks to Buffalo Bill and his Wild West Circus' visit to the city in the early 1900s.

## 5 LOKEREN

One of the most improved teams in the country, going from 14th last season to a championship play-offs berth this term. Cut a real dash in the early 1980s when boasting such world-class attackers as Preben Elkjaer of Denmark and Poland's Wlodzimierz Lubanski and Grzegorz Lato.

## 6 STANDARD LIEGE

Directors, players and fans only seem to have one reason to exist – to make life as difficult as possible for arch-rivals Anderlecht and, at times, the hatred can become self-defeating. Ten-times Belgian champions, *Les Rouches* (the reds) came close to bankruptcy in the 1990s, but were saved by Adidas chief Robert Louis-Dreyfus.

**Fleeting glory...Francis Severeyns scores for Antwerp in the 1993 Cup-winners Cup Final against Parma**

unfair set-up, it was no surprise at all when, in December, the clubs voted 12-4 to return to the old system of 16 teams playing each other home and away.

The ballot was construed at the time as a victory for the traditionalists: a group made up of Standard Liege and the nation's middle-to-lower ranking sides. However, the backers of the dual-championship – the so-called "G4", which was made up of Belgium's leading club Anderlecht, plus Club Brugge, Gent and Genk – refused to take no for an answer and after four months of intense lobbying managed to overturn the decision.

At a meeting of the league's council in late February, not only did a majority (11-5) pass a motion to keep the play-offs for the next three years, they



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Anderlecht...Constant Vanden Stock Stadium

Club Brugge home...Jan Breydel Stadium

Happy days...Genk's Cristal Arena

Gent territory...Jules Ottenstadion

Looking up...Lokeren's Daknamstadion

Pride of Liege...Stade Maurice Dufrasne

# ...AND THE REST

## 2 CERCLE BRUGGE

While their groundshare rivals Club Brugge draw support from the entire region of Flanders, Cercle like to think of themselves as the veritable flag-bearers of their city. Since regaining top-flight status in 2003 they have experienced few problems re-establishing themselves and achieved a fourth-place finish in 2008.

## 7 CHARLEROI

Bottom at the end of the regular season, *Les Zebres* (the zebras) are floundering badly, inextricably linked to the fact that they have had

Downturn...Stade du Pays de Charleroi

six coaches in the past 12 months. Once a top-end address in Walloon (French-speaking) football circles, they were the last club of ex-national team star Enzo Scifo.

## 8 EUPEN

In their first-ever season in the top flight, the club from the small German-speaking community in the east of the country have struggled as expected. Their chairman is Antonio Imborgia, once the agent of Argentina's Gabriel Batistuta and Portugal's Nuno Gomes.

## 9 GERMINAL BEERSCHOT

From the south of Antwerp, and formed in 1999 from the merger of Beerschot – a famous name in Belgian football who won seven league titles in the 1920s and 30s – and Germinal Ekeren. Nurturing youth is their speciality, and alumni include current internationals Thomas Vermaelen, Jan Vertonghen, Toby Alderweireld and Moussa Dembele.

## 10 LIERSE

Presently the fiefdom of Egyptian businessman Maged Samy, last season's second division champions have not adapted well to the Pro League and are already on their third coach of the campaign. The club which, in the 1970s, discovered all-time great Belgian forwards Jan Ceulemans and Erwin Vandenbergh.

## 11 KORTRIJK

The best the second division had to offer in 2007-08, they only narrowly avoided relegation in their first season back in the Pro League but went from strength to strength last term, finishing fifth in the championship mini-league. Went bankrupt in 2001 and rebuilt in the third tier.

## 12 MECHELEN

Thanks to cash injection by entrepreneur John Cordier, the club from the Antwerp region clambered to the top of the domestic and continental pile in the late 1980s, notably winning the European Cup-winners Cup in 1988 and the Belgian league the following year. But when Cordier's money ran out, the decline set in and after liquidation in 2003 they had to start again from scratch in the third division.

## 13 SINT TRUIDEN

Second division champions in 2008-09, *De Kanaries* (the canaries) ended last season's Pro League in a richly-merited fourth place. The club with the smallest foreign player contingent (only 26 per cent) and the lowest number of different nationalities (five).

## 14 WESTERLO

The club from Antwerp province made their elite bow 14 years ago and deserve much praise for the shrewd and spirited way they have turned themselves into part of the Pro League scenery. Their small, intimate ground is known as Het Kuipje ("little tank"), an in-joke reference to De Kuip, Feyenoord's cavernous arena in Rotterdam.

Race...Westerlo's Daniel Chavez (left) takes on Zulte Waregem

## 15 ZULTE WAREGEM

The west Flanders club are the product of a 2001 marriage of convenience between the cash-strapped KSV Waregem and the more stable Zultse VV. Promoted to the top flight in 2005, they had won the Belgian Cup within a year.

also agreed on a radical new relegation format: results over three seasons determining the identity of the 15th and 16th-placed clubs, the latter to be directly demoted and the former entering the second division promotion round-robin.

### Surreal situation

A surreal situation indeed. Messy too. So, how did the G4 manage to get their roadblock in place ? The answer is simple: they threw money at it. Parachute payments for relegated clubs were increased to £1million, while those not involved in the championship mini-league were tempted with the promise of hand-outs worth £220,000.

Cue waves of outrage. The 80 per cent of supporters who were opposed to the play-offs have been rallying to have their voice heard and have begun to protest by waving white handkerchiefs at games.

Meanwhile, second division sides angrily dubbed the relegation reforms illegal and they eventually won the day when the national Competition Council ruled in their favour, forcing the Pro League to back-track.

Charleroi president Abbas Bayat, who is never the slowest to voice his opinions, claimed Anderlecht, the club many regard as the self-obsessed villain of the piece, were guilty of self-serving interests.

Driving the experiment is the realisation that the standing of the league has gone off the cliff in the last two decades. Between 1975 and 1990,

In the recent negotiations over the play-off system, Anderlecht are seen as the self-obsessed villain of the piece by other clubs

Belgian clubs reached no fewer than 11 European finals, and in 1980 the country ranked as high as third in the UEFA coefficient standings. Then came the deluge. Since Antwerp lost to Parma in the Final of the 1993 Cup-winners Cup, no Belgian side has gone as far, and 14th place in today's European coefficient list speaks for itself.

As proven by the high number of top-flight clubs who have either folded or merged in the 116-year history of the Belgian league, financial resources have always been thinly spread in these parts and the squeeze continues today. Unlike

**Arm wrestling...ex-Genk defender Joao Carlos (left) tussles with Jean Acosta Soares of Germinal Beerschot**

the major European championships, the top-flight clubs earn more from match-day revenue and sponsorship than broadcasting monies. The current TV deal with Belgacom is very much small potatoes: £39.2million over three years, compared to the astronomic £1.42billion the English Premier League pulls in. No wonder Belgian Pro League sides have spent only £22m on new signings in the past two transfer windows – 30 times less than the Anglo fat cats splashed out in the same period.

The late Belgium, Standard Liege and Marseille coach Raymond Goethals was correct when he noted that the country's top sides were already seeping competitiveness in the early 1990s.

But there can be no doubt that the Bosman ruling in 1995, ironically initiated by one of their own, Jean-Marc Bosman and which led to the liberalisation of the transfer market, accelerated the process of decline.

While the big guns in Europe went on to monopolise the marquee players and cash, Belgian clubs were left with the crumbs. And they further compounded their problems by then stacking their line-ups with cheap foreign imports, thus

## MOVERS AND SHAKERS

### THE POLITICIANS

**Francois De Keersmaecker**
The 53-year-old Mechelen lawyer became Belgian federation president in June 2006. Often accused of blandness nor being pro-active enough.

**Andre Antoine**
Minister for Sport who lobbied hard for the league to scrap the decision to determine relegation on the basis of results over three years.

**Alain Courtois**
Ex-federation general secretary and Euro 2000 organiser-in-chief turned national senator. Part of the Benelux bid to host the 2018 World Cup.

**Philippe Collin**
Anderlecht secretary-general and federation technical commission head. Infuriated Standard by panning one of their player's displays for Belgium.

### THE NATIONAL COACH

**Georges Leekens**
Once a tough-tackling Club Brugge central defender, so ruthless that he was christened "Mac the Knife", he began his second stint as coach in May 2010. Has led all the top clubs in the country, apart from Standard.

### THE CAPTAIN

**Daniel Van Buyten**
Although not in the best of form this term for his club Bayern Munich, Belgium's central defender has proved himself to be a highly influential team leader in the absence of long-term injury victim Thomas Vermaelen.

**Roger Vanden Stock**
Anderlecht's president since 1996. His father, brewery boss Constant, in 15 years at the helm turned the club into a sound business and Parc Astrid into one of best medium-sized stadia in Europe.

**Luciano D'Onofrio**
Controversial Standard Liege vice-president who loves to lob verbal grenades, mostly at Anderlecht. His decision to give the Standard coach's job to brother Dominique infuriated many supporters.

**Ivan De Witte**
Gent president who doubles up as chief of the Pro League. Founder of Belgian recruitment company Hudson, he has been at the eye of the storm trying to achieve consensus over championship reforms.

**Bart Verhaeghe**
CEO of real estate firm Uplace, he took over as Club Brugge chairman in February following the resignation of Pol Jonckheere. Instantly on the defensive, denying media claims that he wanted to buy Mechelen.

### THE CLUB BOSSES



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Solid...Vincent Kompany beats Finland's Mikael Forssell

limiting the chances of the home-grown.

At the moment more than one in two Pro League players is from overseas (53.7 per cent) and, more alarming still, the figure is increasing year on year. Only Cyprus, England, Portugal and Greece boast more non-indigenous players, and with the likes of Gent and Anderlecht so heavily reliant on migrants (71.4 and 66.6 per cent respectively), the prospects for young Belgian players does not look particularly bright.

"Our country is Palestine in its football infrastructure," wailed a contributor to a parliamentary round table on the game two years ago and, though over-egging the pudding somewhat, there was a kernel of truth to the claim. The Pro League has only five stadia with a capacity of over 20,000, and training facilities and youth development schemes suffer, for the most part, from the shoestring syndrome.

Not that it's all doom and gloom. Clubs such as Standard Liege and Germinal Beerschot have excellent academies, and after failing to reach the last four major international tournaments, the senior national team, the *Diables Rouges* (red devils) are at long last punching their weight, constructing their renaissance on the young men who helped seal semi-final berths at the 2007 European Under-21 Championship and the 2008 Olympics. In Eden Hazard, Vincent Kompany, Thomas Vermaelen and Marouane Fellaini, Belgium has the talent – but does it have the administrators and politicians to match? WS

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Keir Radnedge

# THE INSIDER

The expert view on events off the pitch

# The battle for FIFA

## Presidential election could go to the wire

Challenger...Bin Hammam

Wednesday, June 1, 2011, could be a historic day for FIFA as the 208 officially recognised, paid-up nation members of world football's governing body choose a new president...and he could be the first Asian to break the European/Brazilian axis.

FIFA has had only eight presidents since being founded 107 years ago: three Englishmen (DB Woolfall, Arthur Drewry and Stanley Rous), two Frenchmen (Robert Guerin and Jules Rimet), one Belgian (Rodolphe Seeldrayers), one Swiss (current incumbent Sepp Blatter) and a Brazilian (Joao Havelange).

This is the irony of the "mission" which Blatter has carried on from the Havelange era. He wanted to take the game far and wide, to embrace all corners of the world, and in so doing he sowed the seeds of ambition. No surprise that the far outposts of an empire ruled from the heart of Europe should wish eventually to take that power into their own hands.

While, at this stage, it is impossible to pick up threads which will pull and push the argument between president Blatter and challenger Mohamed Bin Hammam, there is a grand simplicity about the confrontation: Blatter represents the stability of the known, Bin Hammam the unknown.

As for the power game, Bin Hammam has far more money and resources to throw at the campaign, while Blatter's strength lies in his very incumbency: 13 years of favours stored up and now due to be called in.

Bin Hammam has promised to double the handouts – sorry, "development support finance" – and to almost double the size of the executive committee. But while the latter offer may appeal to individuals, what it offers the world game is questionable. Basically, it would make the executive unwieldy and decision-making would be withdrawn to a small executive board around the president.

A change of the guard would also change the nature of the presidency. Bin Hammam would not move his home to Zurich; presumably he would visit regularly while establishing his own personal FIFA presidential bureau in Doha. He would then need a trusted secretary-general to run the show in Zurich – just as Havelange relied on Blatter for most of his tenure. Would this mean Jerome Valcke staying or would Bin Hammam want his own man in place?

Valcke is said to have been treading a careful diplomatic line between Blatter and Bin Hammam.

His experience in making South Africa 2010 "work" would appear to make him invaluable in repeating the effort with the tardy Brazilians heading towards the 2014 World Cup.

Of course, he would not necessarily need the formal title of secretary-general to carry that through – "FIFA World Cup Executive Director" has a neat ring to it, plus, of course, the rewarding bonus-supported contract.

> Blatter represents the stability of the known, Bin Hammam the unknown

Assessing where the votes will fall is also a risky exercise.

Bin Hammam will hope to carry most of Asia, though he has his opponents, critics and enemies. He will also win

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African votes thanks to his leadership of the Goal project. Blatter, meanwhile, will hope to carry most of Europe with him. But is that enough of a core vote?

Once again, CONCACAF and Jack Warner could control the destiny of world football.

Blatter is a complex man: at once an undoubted football enthusiast, never short of ideas (good and bad), personable and such a consummate political operator that it might be said his talents are wasted on "mere" sport. When asked whether he had any advice for Blatter, Olympic president Jacques Rogge responded: "Mr Blatter does not need any advice from me on how to win elections."

In 2002, the first time he stood for re-election and against a furious backdrop over FIFA's finances, Blatter still managed to wipe the election floor with Issa Hayatou. This time it is different. For all the massive gains "his" FIFA has achieved in securing football's worldwide sporting domination and financial power, he has a fight on his hands.

Franz Beckenbauer, who is quitting FIFA's executive committee after just one four-year term, believes Blatter's pledge that "this would be my last term in office" may not be enough of a lure, saying: "If Bin Hammam has decided to stand it is because he believes he has enough support to give him a real chance."

Beckenbauer thinks all Europe's national associations should vote for Blatter in the expectation of then putting Michel Platini into power in four years' time, adding: "I have great confidence in Michel. He has done an unbelievable job as president of UEFA – which isn't the easiest organisation to lead – and brought it stability and new purpose. He would make an equally good FIFA president.

"If Blatter is re-elected then that is the path to follow. But if Bin Hammam wins then world football is looking at a very different future."

True, but as so many presidents and prime ministers have found to their surprise down the years, while – to bend Lord Acton's Dictum – power corrupts, absolute power merely...bores.

That, more than Bin Hammam's surprising emergence after all these years as a FIFA revolutionary, may be the opponent Blatter needs fear the most. WS ➤

Task masters...(left to right) Pele, Blatter and Beckenbauer

# Fans: Take FIFA to Task

Football fans around the planet watched the 2010 World Cup in record, billion-strong numbers. They saw an event whose organisational capacity surprised many, but also an event which provided too few moments of indelible footballing memory.

But are those fans represented on the FIFA Task Force Football 2014 which is entrusted with proposals on brightening up the game? Is the media, which carries the message, represented? Are the sponsors and television executives, who finance the message, represented?

> The 22-member Task Force consists only of high-profile "names" and senior-status administrators

No, No and No again. Instead, the 22-member Task Force, chaired by Germany's Franz Beckenbauer, with Brazil's Pele as his deputy, consists only of high-profile "names" and senior-status administrators.

The mission is wide-ranging. It will consider proposals to "improve both the attractiveness of football and match control in elite competitions in areas such as the laws of the game, refereeing, competition regulations, women's football, medical matters and fair play".

And the great and the good with such insight, vision and understanding alongside Beckenbauer and Pele are: Carlos Alarcon (Paraguay), Demetrio Albertini (Italy), Massimo Busacca (Switzerland), Kalusha Bwalya (Zambia), Cafu (Brazil), Bobby Charlton (England), Ivan Curkovic (Serbia), Jiri Dvorak (FIFA medical), Sunil Gulati (USA), Fernando Hierro (Spain), Charmaine Hooper (Canada), Alex Horne (England), Christian Karembeu (France/New Caledonia), Lu Tracy (China), Ioan Lupescu (Romania), Peter Mikkelsen (Denmark), Dejan Savicevic (Montenegro), Marina Sbardella (Italy), Kohzo Tashima (Japan) and Theo Van Seggelen (FIFPro).

All are highly qualified, but this is not the issue. They have been selected by the Football Committee, Referees Committee as well as the Technical and Development Committee. The Football Committee, incidentally and not surprisingly, selected six of its own members.

FIFA, in announcing the identities of the Task Force membership and their mission, did not suggest that they would be inviting worldwide contributions and suggestions. However, if any *World Soccer* readers do write in, FIFA says that any such suggestions and proposals "are more than welcome". These will be reviewed by the Technical Department and a reply is assured. Plus a pat on the head, no doubt.

Patronising? Arrogant? No wonder a mood for change is in the air.

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# Bayern model loses its appeal

Recent fun and games at Bayern Munich have raised smiles among directors and officials at other clubs – both in Germany and abroad – who tire of hearing how the record German champions have developed the perfect administrative model.

This model is of a top-level football club which can pay the biggest wages in its country, buy top foreign players (Franck Ribery, Arjen Robben), attract ever-extending sponsorship zillions and yet still come out making a profit.

To sum up: a club cruising gently into the waters of Financial Fairplay knowing that its directors have all the angles covered. A little like Arsenal – though Bayern do tend to win far more trophies – there is no likelihood of either ever being barred from European competition because of an accounting imbalance.

Another sphere in which Bayern are held up as an example concerns the manner in which star players feed through after their careers are over, not only into the coaching staff but up into the highest levels of management.

Franz Beckenbauer set the standard. The former World Cup and Champions Cup-winning captain of club and country was later, by turns, coach and then club president. In between he also rose to become vice-president of the German football federation, bidding and then organising president of the 2006 World Cup and, most recently, one of UEFA's representatives on the controversial FIFA executive committee.

At one stage there was even talk of him becoming president of FIFA, but that faded into silence the longer Sepp Blatter remained in office. Anyway, Beckenbauer could probably not have afforded the income drop which becoming FIFA president would have meant – he is one of Germany's most lucratively rewarded commercial personalities.

Different playing field...ex-Bayern team-mates Rummenigge (left) and Hoeness

> There is no likelihood of Bayern being barred from European competition because of an accounting imbalance

And behind Beckenbauer came former team-mates Uli Hoeness (now club president) and Karl-Heinz Rummenigge (chief executive and chairman of the European Clubs Association). Perfect? Not quite.

Bayern crashed out of the German Cup in the semi-finals, threw away a Champions League advantage against Internazionale and risk failing to qualify for next season, when the Final will be staged in their own Allianz Arena.

Amid all that, a very public war of words ended with Hoeness sacking coach Louis Van Gaal after saying the Dutchman would stay until the end of the season.

The model, it seems, is still in need of a little refinement.

## Handbags at three paces

Arsenal's 1-1 draw with Liverpool had a dramatic ending. Not so much the two penalties after 10 minutes of stoppage time, but the touchline spat between managers Arsene Wenger and Kenny Dalglish.

That YouTube clip will surely run and run...

Flashpoint...Liverpool boss Dalglish (right) and Wenger

# Main men for the European minnows

Nick Bidwell profiles the key figures for some of Europe's smaller national sides

## 1 Joan Simun Edmundsson

FAROE ISLANDS

**AGE**
19 (26.07.91)
**POSITION**
Midfielder
**CLUB**
Newcastle United (Eng)

Equally at home leading the line or pulling the strings in central midfield, the 19-year-old Faroese has already made a name for himself on the international stage. He first caught the eye with a stunning strike which gave the Faroes' Under-21 side a shock 1-0 victory over Russia, and was quickly rewarded with a call-up to the senior side. He made his debut in a World Cup qualifier against France in August 2009, just a few weeks after his 18th birthday and four months later went out on loan from local side B68 Toftir to English club Newcastle United – a deal that was made permanent the following summer.

Faroes boss Brian Kerr, the former Republic of Ireland manager, is a big admirer, singling out Edmundsson's incisiveness, honesty and enthusiasm. However, one potential problem area is the youngster's lack of first-team action – he has yet to make a Premier League start.

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# 2 Mario Frick

## LIECHTENSTEIN

**AGE**
36 (07.09.74)
**POSITION**
Forward
**CLUB**
Grasshopper (Swi)

Liechtenstein's Euro 2012 qualifier at home to Lithuania in early June is set to be a memorable evening for their long-serving captain. Fitness prevailing, Frick is in line to win his 100th senior cap for the tiny principality.

Save for a brief absence after a falling out with coach Ralf Loose and the national federation in 2002, he has been a fixture in the Liechtenstein side since making his debut as a 19-year-old in 1993. Often cast in the thankless role of lone striker in a side whose main priority is normally defence, Frick has been on the winning side just seven times – but he has still managed to find the net against some of the toughest opponents around, with strikes against Germany, Romania and Sweden.

Liechtenstein's all-time top scorer with 16 goals, and for a long time the country's only professional player, the Switzerland-born veteran has been playing club football for over 17 years, mostly in Italy's top two divisions, with Arezzo, Verona, Ternana and Siena. He joined Grasshopper in January from St Gallen.

# 3 Lars Gerson

## LUXEMBOURG

**AGE**
21 (05.02.90)
**POSITION**
Midfielder
**CLUB**
Kongsvinger (Nor)

Luxembourg is not normally associated with sporting dynasties, but Lars Gerson may be about to change that. The son of a well-known handball player, Henri Gerson, the midfielder is starting to establish himself as the lynchpin of the national team's midfield with some impressive displays.

Born in the Grand Duchy, but raised in his mother's home country of Norway, Gerson rose rapidly through the junior ranks of his local side Kongsvinger and was a first-team regular by the age of 18. He played a prominent part in the club's promotion to the top flight in 2009, although their subsequent relegation has cast some doubt over his future.

With full-time players a rare commodity in the country's domestic game, Gerson was called up for the national Under-17 team and went on to make his senior debut, against Wales, in 2008. Earlier this year he bagged his first international goal, opening the scoring in a 3-1 Euro 2012 qualifying loss to Romania.

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# 4 Ildefons Lima

## ANDORRA

**AGE**
31 (10.12.79)
**POSITION**
Defender
**CLUB**
Bellinzona (Swi)

He may play for one of world football's smallest countries – the tiny mountain state has a population of just 71,000 – but that has not stopped the gritty centre-back from giving a rough ride to some of the game's biggest names. Results may not have gone Lima's way too often as Andorra have only ever won three games, but many opponents have struggled to throw off his uncompromising shackles – not least Russia's Andrei Arshavin, who was sent off in a Euro 2008 qualifier for aiming a retaliatory kick at him. Not that Lima's contribution is restricted solely to defence.

He is particularly dangerous from attacking set-pieces and his seven international goals place him at the top of the Andorran goalscoring charts.

Born in his country's capital city, Andorra la Vella, Lima began his career with local side FC Andorra before spells in the Spanish lower leagues and further afield in both Greece and Mexico. He later returned to Spain (Las Palmas and Rayo Vallecano) and went on to spend four years in Italy with Triestina before signing for Swiss side Bellinzona in 2009.

# 5 George Mallia

## MALTA

**AGE**
32 (10.10.78)
**POSITION**
Midfielder
**CLUB**
Qormi

A Maltese league champion and a full international by the tender age of 18, Mallia was hailed as one of the brightest young prospects to have emerged from the small Mediterranean island. But in 2000 he picked up a red card in an Under-21 league game, and reacted so badly that he was handed a hefty four-month suspension by the Maltese FA.

With a growing reputation for having a suspect temperament, his international prospects looked to be under serious threat, but Mallia's undeniable prowess – coupled with sheer hard work – meant he could not be overlooked for long.

More than a decade on, he remains a vital cog in the Malta side. A striker in his early days, he now pushes forward on the left side of midfield and has five goals to his name from 65 international appearances.

# 6 Andy Selva

## SAN MARINO

**AGE**
34 (25.05.76)
**POSITION**
Forward
**CLUB**
Verona (Ita)

Hailed, alongside former Juventus defensive midfielder Massimo Bonini, as the best player ever to represent his country, Selva has been a regular for San Marino since making his debut back in 1998.

Small in stature, but a fiercely committed performer, Selva's eight goals in 50 games have made him his country's all-time top marksman, and he remains the only San Marino player to have scored in more than one international game. Inevitably, it was Selva who found the net in the country's only victory, a 1-0 friendly win against Liechtenstein in 2004.

Born in Rome to a Sammarinese mother, Selva has spent 15 seasons in Italian professional and semi-pro football, finding the net with consistent regularity. He is currently playing for Verona in the Italian third tier.

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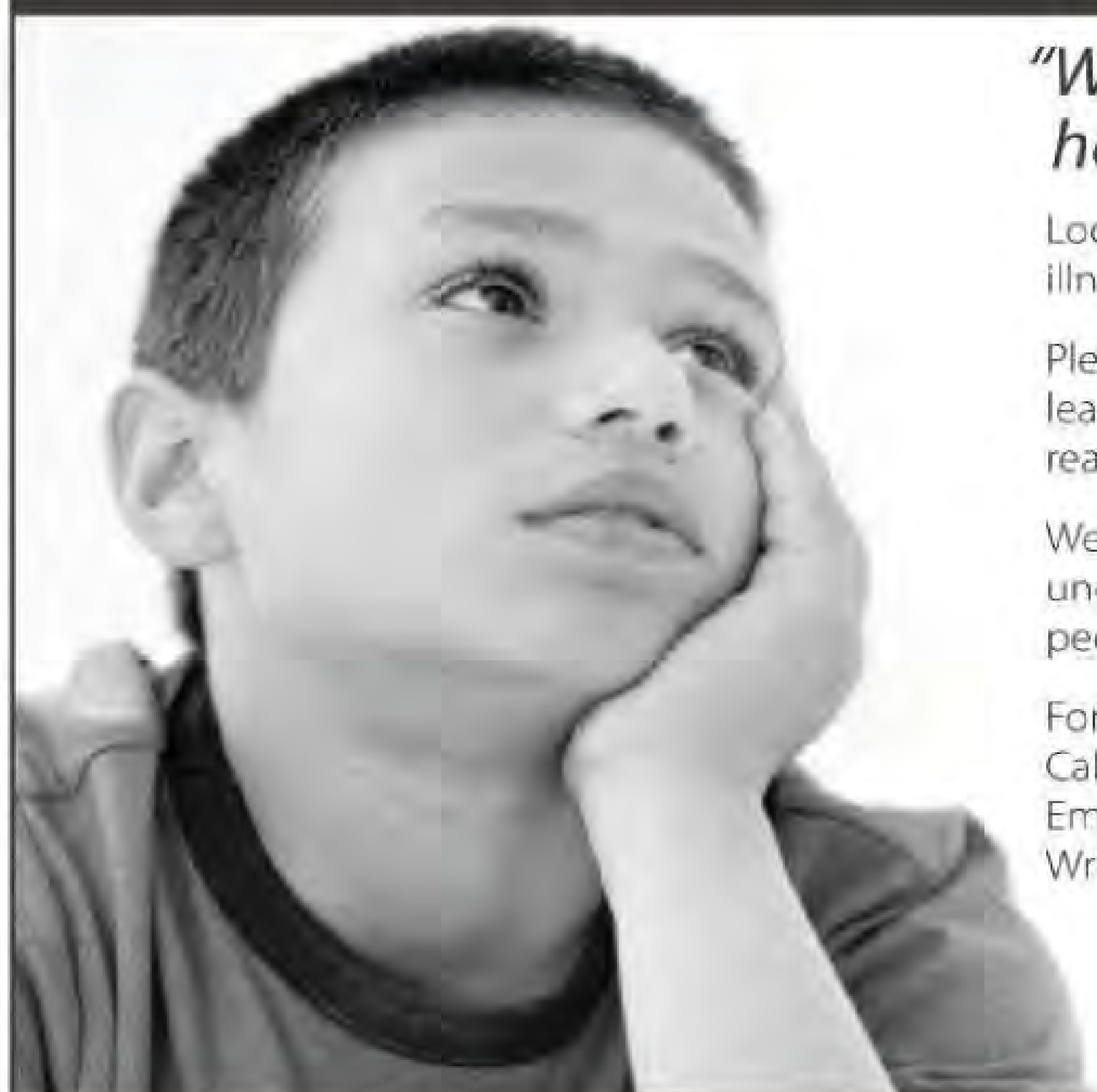
My daddy wasn't scared of anything - except feeling sad



***"We didn't know daddy was so sad until he tried to take his own life"*** **Jamie, aged 12**

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# World Service

The ultimate Global news & results section

Masked man...Schalke's Christoph Metzelder tries to get to grips with Javier Hernandez of Manchester United in the Champions League

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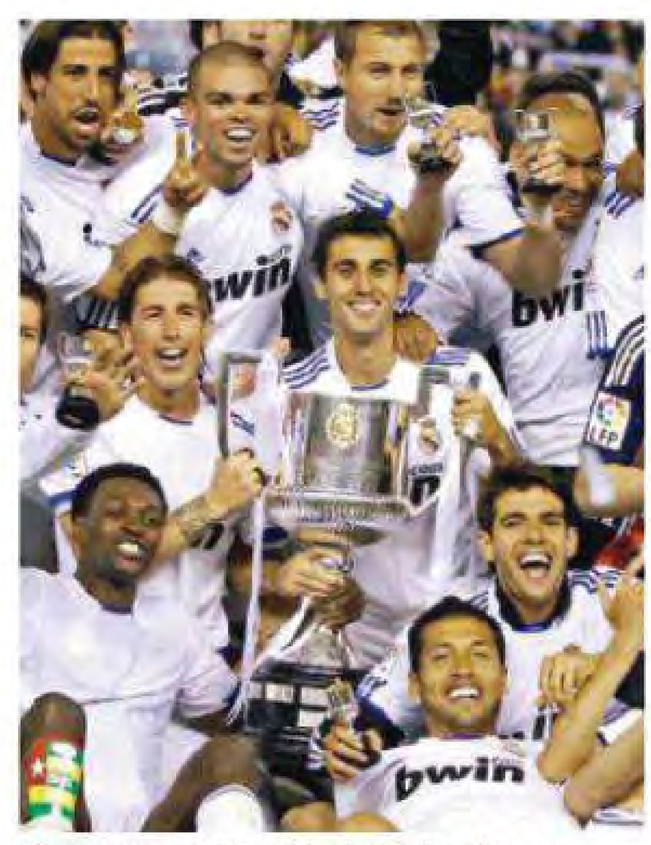

Silverware...Real Madrid win the Spanish Cup

GABON

### Hosts' warm-up games

The 2012 African Nations Cup co-hosts will play Costa Rica and Jamaica on June 5 and June 9 respectively as part of their preparations for the tournament in January.

JAPAN

### Copa America back on

The Asian champions have confirmed they will take part in this summer's Copa America after initially announcing their withdrawal following the earthquake and tsunami which devastated the country in March.

However, with the J.League rescheduling backlogged fixtures for July, many top-flight domestic clubs have said they are opposed to releasing players for the tournament, which will run from July 1 to July 24 in Argentina.

NEPAL

### Roberts makes finals

Ex-England and Tottenham Hotspur defender Graham Roberts' Nepal side became the eighth and final nation to qualify for the finals of the 2012 AFC Challenge Cup with their 0-0 draw against Sri Lanka.

"We didn't play the match for a draw," said Roberts afterwards. "We wanted to win the match by a clear margin.

"We were playing an attacking game and had to change to defensive formation in the last 20 minutes. It was a hectic schedule and the boys are tired, but I am happy the way my players played."

Happy...Nepal coach Roberts



# Internationals

## 2012 AFC CHALLENGE CUP QUALS

**Group A**

AFC CHALLENGE CUP QUALS – GP A – FINAL

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Palestine | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 7 |
| Philippines | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 5 |
| Bangladesh | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 3 |
| Myanmar | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 1 |

**Group B**

AFC CHALLENGE CUP QUALS – GP B – FINAL

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| India | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 2 | 7 |
| Turkmenistan | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 7 |
| Pakistan | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 3 |
| Taiwan | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 7 | 0 |

**Group C**

AFC CHALLENGE CUP QUALS – GP C – FINAL

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Maldives | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 7 |
| Tajikistan | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 7 |
| Kyrgyzstan | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 3 |
| Cambodia | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 11 | 0 |

**Group D**

*In Kathmandu, Nepal*

*Apr 7*
**Afghanistan 0**
**Nepal 1** (Khawas 27)
**HT:** 0-1. **Att:** 9,100. **Ref:** Baqi (Oma)
**Afghanistan:** Faqiryar - Islam, Rezai, Sharityar, Hashemi (M Barakzai 70), Kohistani, Nadeem (Yusef 47), Habib, Alikhil, Walizada (H Barakzai 87), Hadid.
**Nepal:** Kiran - R Shrestha (Bhusal 85), Maharjan, Chand, S Rai, S Thapa, Khadka, Tamang (Silwal 75), A Gurung, J M Rai, Khawas (Sahukala 60).

*Apr 7*
**North Korea 4** (Choe Kum-chol 2, 48, Ri Chol-myong 5, Pak Nam-chol (MF) 21)
**Sri Lanka 0**
**HT:** 3-0. **Att:** 2,000. **Ref:** Al Marzouq (Kuw)
**North Korea:** Kim Myong-gil - Ri Kwang-chon, Kang Kuk-chol (Jong Il-gwan 23), Jon Kwang-ik, Pak Nam-chol (DF), Ri Kwang-hyok, Pak Nam-chol (MF) (Pak Song-chol (FW) 57), Pak Song-chol (MF), Ri Chol-myong, Kim Kuk-jin, Choe Kum-chol (Choe Myong-ho 57).
**Sri Lanka:** Viraj - Warakagoda, Ruwanthilake (S D Kumara 61), Bandara, Krishantha, Tharaka, Sanjeev, Zain, Meera, Shafraz (Dalpethado 81), Pushpakumara.

*Apr 9*
**Sri Lanka 0**
**Afghanistan 1** (Hadid 82)
**HT:** 0-0. **Att:** 1,800. **Ref:** Al Qaysi (Irq)
**Sri Lanka:** Fernando - Warakagoda, Bandara, S D Kumara, L K C Kumara, Krishantha, Tharaka (Nazar 61), Zain, Meera (Izadeen 77), Shafraz (Dalpethado 83), Pushpakumara.
**Afghanistan:** Faqiryar - Qazizadah, Islam, Rezai, Sharityar, Kohistani, Habib, Alikhil (Shayesteh 51), Walizada (H Barakzai 73), Hadid, Yusef (Hashemi 59).

*Apr 9*
**Nepal 0**
**North Korea 1** (Jong Il-gwan 31)
**HT:** 0-1. **Att:** 22,000. **Ref:** Al Abbasi (Bhr)
**Nepal:** Kiran - R Shrestha, Maharjan, Chhetri, S Rai, S Thapa, Khadka, Tamang (J M Rai 46), Silwal, Khawas (Sahukala 46), Lawati (J Shrestha 67). *Sent off: J Shrestha 80min.*
**North Korea:** Kim Myong-gil - Ri Kwang-chon, Jon Kwang-ik, Pak Nam-chol (DF) (Kim Song-gi 51), Ri Kwang-hyok, Pak Nam-chol (MF), Pak Song-chol (MF), Ri Chol-myong, Kim Kuk-jin (An Byong-jun 40), Jong Il-gwan, Choe Kum-chol (Pak Song-chol (FW) 61).

*Apr 11*
**North Korea 2** (Choe Kum-chol 45+1, Ri Chol-myong 68)
**Afghanistan 0**
**HT:** 1-0. **Att:** 1,000. **Ref:** Baqi (Oma)
**North Korea:** Kim Myong-gil - Ri Kwang-chon, Jon Kwang-ik, Ri Kwang-hyok (Ri Il-jin 62), Pak Nam-chol (MF), Pak Song-chol (MF) (Jang Song-hyok 46), Ri Chol-myong, Kim Kuk-jin, Jong Il-gwan, Choe Kum-chol (Rim Chol-min 66), Kim Song-gi.
**Afghanistan:** Faqiryar - Islam (Rezai 83), Sakhizada, Sharityar, Kohistani, Habib, Alikhil, Walizada (H Barakzai 82), Shayesteh (Amiri 62), Hadid, Yusef.

*Apr 11*
**Nepal 0**
**Sri Lanka 0**
**Att:** 13,500. **Ref:** Al Qaysi (Irq)
**Nepal:** Kiran - Maharjan, Bhusal, Chand, S Rai, S Thapa, Khadka (Tamang 60), Silwal, A Gurung (R Shrestha 71), J M Rai, Khawas (Sahukala 54).
**Sri Lanka:** Fernando - Warakagoda, Ruwanthilake, Bandara, L K C Kumara, Krishantha, Rizni (Meera 46), Zain (Pushpakumara 69), Dalpethado, Izadeen, Shafraz (Sanjeev 80).

AFC CHALLENGE CUP QUALS – GP D – FINAL

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| North Korea | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 9 |
| Nepal | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Afghanistan | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| Sri Lanka | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 1 |

*Top 2 in each of the 4 groups qualified for the finals, to be staged in March 2012 (venue to be confirmed)*

## FRIENDLIES

**Saturday, April 2**
*Apr 2 - St George's*
**Grenada 0**
**St Kitts & Nevis 1** (A Saddler 66)
**HT:** 0-0. **Ref:** Bedeau (Gda)
**Grenada:** Noel (A Baptiste 46) - S Phillip, Langaigne (Williams 56), Marshall, Cyrus, R Charles, M Phillip (Ogilvie 74), A Modeste, S Rennie, Facey (Joseph 76), D Daniel (Jeffrey 59).
**St Kitts & Nevis:** Byron - A Saddler (Adams 85), Harris, K Mitchum, Liburd, Howe, Lake, Hughes, Lewis (L Jeffers 82), O'Loughlin, Tishan Hanley (Elliott 71).

**Sunday, April 3**
*Apr 3 - Papeete*
**Tahiti 1** (Labayen pen 57)
**New Caledonia 3** (Kabeu 29, 78, 83)
**HT:** 0-1. **Att:** 2,000. **Ref:** Hauata (Tah)
**Tahiti:** Samin - Faatiarau (Marmouyet 51), Ludivion, Kugogne, J Tenau, Bourebare, L Tehau, Labayen, Voirin, T Tehau (Williams 68), Chong Hue (Neuffer 80).
**New Caledonia:** Hne - Sinedo, Ixoee, Gorendiawe (G Bearune 78), Bako (Read 39; Kaudre 87), E Bearune, Qaeze, Wajoka, M Hmae (Kai 84), Lolohea, Kabeu (Jeansoule 83).
*Sent off: Ixoee 57min.*

**Wednesday, April 6**
*Apr 6 - Paea*
**Tahiti 1** (Rochette 72)
**New Caledonia 0**
**HT:** 0-0. **Att:** 1,000. **Ref:** Zitouni (Tah)
**Tahiti:** Roche - Chang, Marmouyet, J Tehau, Ly Waut, L Tehau, Araneda (Keck 75), Tinorua (Tepa 51), Rochette, Williams (Mataitai 51), Neuffer.
**New Caledonia:** Petemou - Sinedo, Gorendiawe, Read, Kaudre, Bako (Lolohea 60), E Bearune, Qaeze, Wajoka, M Hmae, Kabeu.

**Wednesday, April 20**
*Apr 20 - Mar del Plata*
**Argentina 2** (Yacob 32, Hauche 35)
**Ecuador 2** (M Quinonez 27, Castillo pen 68)
**HT:** 2-1. **Ref:** Silvera (Uru)
**Argentina:** Carrizo - Pillud (Quilez 46), Maidana, F Fernandez (Velazquez 46), Rojas (Monzon 66), Valeri, Yacob (Viatri 44), C Chavez, Hauche (Aued 46), E Perez (Sperdutti 69), Mouche.
**Ecuador:** Elizaga - Paredes, Checa, I Mina, Nazareno (Madrid 90), Castillo, Minda (Caicedo 72), M Quinonez (De Jesus 75), Ibarra (D Quinonez 83), Salas (Erazo 64), N Mina (Govea 64).

## NATIONS CUP

NATIONS CUP

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rep Ireland | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| Scotland | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| N Ireland | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Wales | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 |

08.02.11 Rep of Ireland v Wales ..... 3-0
09.02.11 Northern Ireland v Scotland..... 0-3
24.05.11 Rep of Ireland v N Ireland
25.05.11 Wales v Scotland
27.05.11 Wales v Northern Ireland
29.05.11 Rep of Ireland v Scotland

## KIRIN CUP

*In Japan*

### Match schedule

01.06.11 Japan v Czech Republic (Niigata)
04.06.11 Czech Republic v Peru (Matsumoto)
07.06.11 Japan v Peru (Yokohama)

## 2011 CONCACAF GOLD CUP FINALS

*In the United States*

### Group stage match schedule

**Group A**
05.06.11 Costa Rica v Cuba (Arlington)
05.06.11 Mexico v El Salvador (Arlington)
09.06.11 Costa Rica v El Salvador (Charlotte)
09.06.11 Cuba v Mexico (Charlotte)
12.06.11 El Salvador v Cuba (Chicago)
12.06.11 Mexico v Costa Rica (Chicago)

**Group B**
06.06.11 Jamaica v Grenada (Carson)
06.06.11 Honduras v Guatemala (Carson)
10.06.11 Jamaica v Guatemala (Miami)
10.06.11 Grenada v Honduras (Miami)
13.06.11 Guatemala v Grenada (Harrison)
13.06.11 Honduras v Jamaica (Harrison)

**Group C**
07.06.11 Panama v Guadeloupe (Detroit)
07.06.11 United States v Canada (Detroit)
11.06.11 Canada v Guadeloupe (Tampa)
11.06.11 United States v Panama (Tampa)
14.06.11 Canada v Panama (Kansas City)
14.06.11 Guadeloupe v United States (Kansas City)

*Top 2 in each group and the 2 3rd-placed teams with the best record qualify for quarter-finals*

## FRIENDLY FIXTURES

14.05.11 Tanzania v South Africa (Dar es Salaam)
17.05.11 Tanzania v Chad
24.05.11 Palestine v Pakistan
25.05.11 Argentina v Honduras (Resistencia)
27.05.11 Palestine v Pakistan
28.05.11 Mexico v Ecuador (Seattle, USA)
29.05.11 Germany v Uruguay (Sinsheim)
Honduras v El Salvador (Houston, USA)
30.05.11 Costa Rica v Nigeria (San Jose)
01.06.11 Canada v Ecuador (Toronto)
Mexico v New Zealand (Denver, USA)
Nigeria v Argentina (Lagos)
Ukraine v Uzbekistan (Kiev)
03.06.11 Bolivia v Paraguay (Santa Cruz)
Hong Kong v Malaysia
Luxembourg v Hungary
South Korea v Serbia
04.06.11 Algeria v Argentina (Switzerland)
Brazil v Holland (Goiania)
China v Uzbekistan (Beijing)
Poland v Czech Republic (Krakow)
United States v Spain (Foxboro)
05.06.11 Australia v New Zealand (Adelaide)
06.06.11 Ukraine v France (Donetsk)
07.06.11 Austria v Latvia (Graz)
Brazil v Romania (Sao Paulo)
China v Serbia (Guiyang)
Norway v Lithuania (Oslo)
Paraguay v Bolivia (Asuncion)
Slovenia v Macedonia (Maribor)
South Korea v Ghana
Uruguay v Holland
09.06.11 Poland v France (Gdansk)

# OCEANIA
# Auckland are O-League champions

Heading for Japan...Auckland City's Ivan Vicelich (left) and his team-mates celebrate booking their place in this year's Club World Cup

## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

By defeating Vanuatu's Amicale 6-1 on aggregate in a two-legged Final, Auckland City recorded their second O-League success and restored New Zealand's grip on the competition.

Local rivals Waitakere City, who can boast a couple of titles, and last year's winners Hekari United, from Papua New Guinea, are the only other clubs to have won the trophy.

Like Hekari, Amicale are blessed with a generous sponsor, who has recruited talented Solomon Islands internationals, and they were expected to test the Aucklanders.

However, unlike Hekari, they were unable to call upon the services of Alick Maemae – the most influential player in the 2010 Final – who joined the Vanuatu champions shortly afterwards, but did not play in this year's finale due to unspecified personal commitments.

Even so, Amicale dominated possession for large chunks of the first leg in Port Vila, only to be beaten by the clumsiness of their goalkeeper, Ernest Bong, and the concession of a late goal.

After an even first 20 minutes, Bong raced off his line and upended Manuel Exposito, one of City's three Spaniards, with a lumbering challenge, forcing New Caledonian referee Bertrand Billion to point to the penalty spot.

Bong almost made amends by getting his hands to Exposito's resultant kick, but he failed to stop it finding the net.

The hosts responded by seizing the initiative and maintaining it for over an hour, yet had to wait until midway through the second half for tangible reward. Nimble striker Fenedy Masauvakalo latched on to a loose ball inside the box, swivelled and then neatly clipped a fine shot past keeper Jacob Spoonley.

Amicale squandered several further opportunities before, with eight minutes of normal time remaining and against the run of play, the Kiwis snatched their fortuitous winner.

Costa Rican substitute Luis Corrales was sprawled on the ground, having lunged at a cross and failed to connect with it, when a defender's attempted clearance ricocheted off him and into the net.

The return, a fortnight later, proved less eventful. Amicale started brightly then fell away after Alex Feneridis extended City's overall lead in the 26th minute. From that point on, it was merely a matter of how many more the home side would score. The answer was three, and they were delivered via Daniel Koprivcic, Exposito and Adam McGeorge, in the 62nd, 72nd and 82nd minutes respectively.

As had been the case in three of the previous four tournaments, it was the Auckland City-Waitakere United derbies that determined the ultimate champions.

This time around, United's shock defeat at Tahitian outfit Tefana meant Auckland needed just an equal share of the points from two Group B clashes with their old adversaries to advance into the Final. Instead, they grabbed four, with a 1-1 draw and 1-0 win.

## NEW ZEALAND FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Although they finished six points ahead of Auckland City after the league phase of the domestic competition, Waitakere United went into the Grand Final as underdogs.

As well as City boasting the better recent form ahead of the game, Waitakere had been decimated by injuries and suspensions, and they were so stretched that coach Neil Emblen was forced to play, just two months short of his 40th birthday.

However, the former Wolverhampton Wanderers midfielder was solid as Waitakere gained some measure of revenge for their O-League shortcomings, beating City 3-2 in a game in which all the goals resulted from defensive errors. The decider came early in stoppage time, from an own goal by James Pritchett, the son of ex-Watford defender Keith Pritchett.

Waitakere therefore registered their third domestic crown, one fewer than City, but it was scant consolation for failing to regain the Champions League – a prize that, with its £310,000 booty and a place in the Club World Cup, has become the focal point for every leading New Zealand side.

***Paul Moon***

Consolation...Waitakere United won the Grand Final but missed out on the bigger prize

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# AMERICAS
# Argentina suffer group casualties

Hot-headed...players and staff from Argentinos Juniors (left) and Fluminense brawl at the conclusion of their final group game, in Buenos Aires, which saw the visitors go through

## LIBERTADORES CUP

The group phase of the Libertadores began in Rio in February, with a game between Fluminense and Argentinos Juniors, and came to a close 10 weeks later when the final whistle blew in the return fixture in Buenos Aires.

Seven minutes earlier, the other game in Group 3, between Nacional of Uruguay and America of Mexico had ended 0-0 – a result that took the Mexicans safely through to the knockout stage, with Nacional set to join them provided there was no late drama in Buenos Aires, where Fluminense led 3-2. A goal for either side in Argentina would take them through at Nacional's expense – and it went to the side from Brazil.

A controversial 88th-minute penalty scored by Fred gave Fluminense the two-goal margin they needed, sparking a brawl between the teams at the end of the game, and providing more compelling evidence for the view that Brazil has become the dominant force in the competition.

Argentinos Juniors became the third Argentinian club to be eliminated, along with seven-times champions Independiente and debutants Godoy Cruz, who were drawn in the same group and finished third and fourth respectively.

The only two representatives from the country left standing were the ones who looked strongest going into the competition, but neither of them covered themselves in glory. Estudiantes suffered heavy defeats to Brazil's Cruzeiro (5-0 away and 3-0 at home), while Velez Sarsfield lost twice to Chilean opposition and needed a last-day win away to Caracas to pull through.

Fluminense's late rescue act, meanwhile, meant that Brazil suffered no casualties in the group phase. And since all of their representatives managed to avoid each other in the round of 16, the possibility exists of an unprecedented five teams from the same country in the final eight.

Like Fluminense, Santos also had to dig themselves out of a hole, largely caused by internal problems and coaching changes, winning their last three games to make sure of their spot. Gremio qualified with more comfort, although their away form was poor, while local Porto Alegre rivals Internacional, the reigning champions, made it through as statistically the third best team in the field of 32.

There was no doubt about the best side, though. Cruzeiro accumulated five wins and a draw, scoring 20 goals in their 6 games and conceding just one.

Remarkably, the second-top scorers missed out. Chile's Colo Colo played some sparkling attacking football, scoring 15 times, but no defence leaked more than their 16 goals. Needing only a draw, they were 2-0 up at home to Cerro Porteno of Paraguay in their final group game, only to lose 3-2.

Conceding just three goals, Nacional had the joint-second best defensive record. But they only scored three and, as noted earlier, were knocked out as a consequence of Fluminense's late spot-kick against Argentinos Juniors.

But the kings of late drama were Once Caldas of Colombia. Three times the team coached by Juan Carlos Osorio conceded an equaliser deep into added time. If football lasted 90 minutes - or even 92 - Caldas would have gone into their last group game, away to San Martin of Peru, with their place in the last 16 assured. Instead, they were still looking for a first win, needing a favourable result in the other group game and also battling a grave financial crisis which almost caused the players to refuse to travel to the match in protest at unpaid wages.

Justice was almost certainly done when Caldas won 2-0, a result which proved good enough for second-round qualification and the chance for the club to earn

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some much-needed cash. San Martin had started so well, winning their first two games, but this defeat was their fourth in a row, leaving Peru without a representative in the knockout phase, a disappointment after the progress the country's clubs had shown in the previous two campaigns.

Venezuela were also wiped out. Caracas, quarter-finalists in 2009, topped the group with a game to go, and only needed a draw at home to Velez Sarsfield, but went down 3-0. Yet again, there is no Bolivian participation in the last 16. Indeed, since Bolivar reached the quarter-finals, in 2000, no club from the country has managed to make it out of the group phase. In all that time, though, very few Bolivian clubs have performed to the level of Oriente Petrolero in this year's competition. With a little more luck they might have made the knockout phase, and at least they can look back with pleasure on a last day 3-0 win over Gremio.

Eight countries are still represented. In addition to the five Brazilian clubs and the two Argentinians, there are two from Mexico, with Jaguares somewhat unconvincingly joining America in the last 16. Colombia also has two – Once Caldas left it late but Junior were the first to qualify, winning their opening four matches – as do Paraguay: Cerro Porteno, who struggled through, and Libertad, who cruised it as one of only two sides unbeaten in the group phase, along with Cruzeiro.

Of three attractive Chilean teams, Universidad Catolica were the only ones to go through, while Ecuador's LDU, always so dangerous at the altitude of Quito, used strong home form to book their place. And the first-ever winners of the Libertadores, Penarol of Uruguay, made the last 16 for the first time since 2002.

***Tim Vickery***

All out...Independiente's Hernan Fredes (left) and Israel Damonte of Godoy Cruz

Winner...Suazo makes it 3-2 to Monterrey on aggregate in the second leg of the Final

# CONCACAF
# Mexican clubs dominate again

## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Having managed an excellent 2-2 draw away to Mexican champions Monterrey, Americans were hoping to celebrate Major League Soccer's coming of age as Real Salt Lake took to the field for the second leg of the Final in front of 20,000 supporters at the Rio Tinto Stadium in Sandy, Utah.

The US side boasted the longest undefeated streak at home in the world – 37 matches, spanning almost two years – and everything looked set to end Mexico's usual regional domination. But, alas, it wasn't meant to be.

Led by Chilean striker Humberto Suazo and with a squad full of internationals from different countries, Monterrey were unlike any other rival Real Salt Lake had faced before. They always perform best on the big occasion and their coach, Victor Manuel Vucetich, is known as "King Midas" by Mexican fans, having won all 10 Finals he has reached in his managerial career.

And the Suazo-Vucetich combo was the recipe for Rayados' success once again. With the referee about to whistle for the end of a first half dominated by the Americans, Suazo finished off a great move with Sergio Santana to put the visitors ahead. Then, in the second half, the experienced coach devised a tactical plan to frustrate any hopes of a reply by the hosts.

In the end, while the Mexicans celebrated in front of the startled home crowd, MLS supporters lamented their missed chance.

Grant Wahl, the star columnist for *Sports Illustrated*, wrote in his recap of the match: "MLS showed it can go toe-to-toe with the reigning Mexican champion.

"But let's be honest: Salt Lake's own players and management said they had to win this Final, and not sealing the deal is a crushing blow for a team that had what it took to raise the trophy as the continent's best club team".

The Final was an exciting end to a tournament that had started out as usual but then departed from its normal path. As it happens every year, the four participating Mexican teams progressed to the quarter-finals but, in an unusual decision, the organizing committee decided they should face each other at that stage, and the winners should play one of the semi-final ties.

The formula, though not entirely ethical, was a huge success. Instead of the usual all-Aztec Final, the tie resulted in a classic reissue of the Mexico-United States rivalry that has marked the region on the international stage.

The intensity of the matches and the dramatic outcome made for a new, far more interesting era of what is an often-neglected continental championship.

***Martin Del Palacio Langer***

# CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL DESTINATION WEMBLEY

**Barcelona reached the 2011 Champions League Final after an epic series of *clasico* matches. Sid Lowe reports on Catalan celebrations and the mood of bitter recrimination in Madrid**

**CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL 2011**

**Barcelona v Manchester United**
**May 28, 2011**
**Wembley Stadium, London**

At the end of the fourth *clasico* in 18 days, when the final chapter of an epic saga had ended with controversial climax, someone finally came up with a suitably cinematic name for it.

"This," said Cristiano Ronaldo, "was *Mission Impossible 4*". He had insisted that what mattered was who "laughed last". But it wasn't the Madrid star. Instead, he wore a face like thunder and Barcelona were celebrating their place in the European Cup Final against Manchester United.

When he reached Barcelona's El Prat Airport, Ronaldo's hand gesture suggested "we were robbed". Madrid coach Jose Mourinho did the same. Somehow, that kind of bitter, recriminatory ending felt inevitable. By the end, both sides of Spain's great divide had the discourse that they had clung to throughout and more "evidence" to support their cause.

Madrid claimed to have been cheated. Barcelona said football had won out. This had become a moral crusade. On both sides. Or, some said, an immoral one.

Picking through the rubble will be a painstaking and unpleasant task. On the eve of the final game, Barca boss Pep Guardiola said something that came as a relief to many: "It will soon be over."

It was wishful thinking; this will keep on running. The fallout has become nuclear, with so much to debate and argue over, so many open wounds that may never heal, not least because few want them to – except Vicente Del Bosque, Spain's national coach who fears collateral damage.

These two will face each other again at the start of next season in the Spanish Super Cup, with battle to commence in August. For now, though, it is time to sort out what actually happened here.

First, the basics. Real Madrid came from a goal down and a man down to draw 1-1 with Barcelona in the first *clasico* at Santiago Bernabeu. They took succour from the result, but it maintained an eight-point gap at the top of the table that all but confirmed Barcelona will be Spanish league champions. Madrid then defeated Barca 1-0 to win the Spanish Cup Final, thanks to a Ronaldo header in extra time. It was Madrid's first trophy in five years under president Florentino Perez and completed an extraordinary run for Jose Mourinho, who has now won something every year since 2003.

Next up, the Champions League. In the first leg, Barcelona beat Madrid 2-0 at the Bernabeu with Lionel Messi getting both goals. The second was his 52nd of the season and was one of the finest the competition has seen. In the second leg, a 1-1 draw saw Barcelona go through to the Final.

Late into the night, they were celebrating down the Ramblas. Guardiola had delivered on his promise to get back to the Final and Barca have now been in two Finals and a semi-final under him.

Four matches: one win each and two draws. A league title for Barcelona, a Spanish Cup for Madrid, and the European Cup

Welcome back...Eric Abidal, who had surgery for a tumour on his liver in March, is thrown into the air by his Barcelona team-mates



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Losing control...players from both sides have their say as matters begin to get out of hand during the first leg in Madrid

Final for Barcelona.

But that does not even begin to tell the story. So much happened – just not always very much in the way of football.

There were some great moments: Messi's goal, Ronaldo's towering header, the move and finish on the second-leg strike from Pedro, Sergio Ramos comically dropping the Spanish Cup under the wheels of the bus during Madrid's trophy parade. But largely, this left a bad taste.

Many were deeply critical of the games and the battles, on and off the pitch. There had been so much bad feeling, accusations and counter-accusations.

Guardiola finally exploded, attacking Mourinho in the press room; there was kicking and diving and moaning; a set-to in the tunnel; allegations of racist abuse; red cards and recriminations.

**Formal complaints**

There were even formal complaints made, denouncements to UEFA. As if the atmosphere was not ugly enough in the media, the clubs – the institutions – were getting involved.

A video on Madrid's website carried the allegation that Sergio Busquets had called Marcelo a "monkey" and accused Barca's players of "acting". They reported eight players to UEFA for "premeditated unsporting behaviour". You would think it was the first game ever when players had exaggerated falls or dived.

Mourinho accused UEFA of fixing it for Barcelona to reach the Final, asking why they always had decisions go their way.

After the second leg, which Madrid's Portuguese coach was forced to watch from his hotel room following his sending off in the first leg, the message was even more pointed.

Because this series grew in significance, and bitterness, from a league title that most assumed was Barcelona's anyway, to a Spanish Cup Final, to a European Cup, it was all about the message at the end of the final game. When that moment came, after Gonzalo Higuain had a goal disallowed, Madrid's message was crystal clear. The final 1-1 result reinforced the Madrid claim that a 0-0 – which Mourinho had admitted to being satisfied with – would have been a good result in the first leg. A goalless draw followed by 1-1 would have put Madrid throug.

Madrid had been denied that 0-0 by Messi's two goals. Or so Mourinho claimed. Madrid said they had been denied by the referee – "the game could have gone on for three hours with 11 men and they would not have scored," claimed Mourinho.

However, by the time of the second leg, the fourth match, there was no way back. After Pepe had been sent off in the first leg, Mourinho said that his side would not be able to turn the result around. Even if Madrid took the lead, he said, "they will just kill us".

After the second leg, his assistant, Aitor Karanka, insisted: "Mourinho was right. One hundred million people have seen this; I have nothing to add."

> You could be forgiven for thinking this was the first game ever in which players had exaggerated falls or had dived

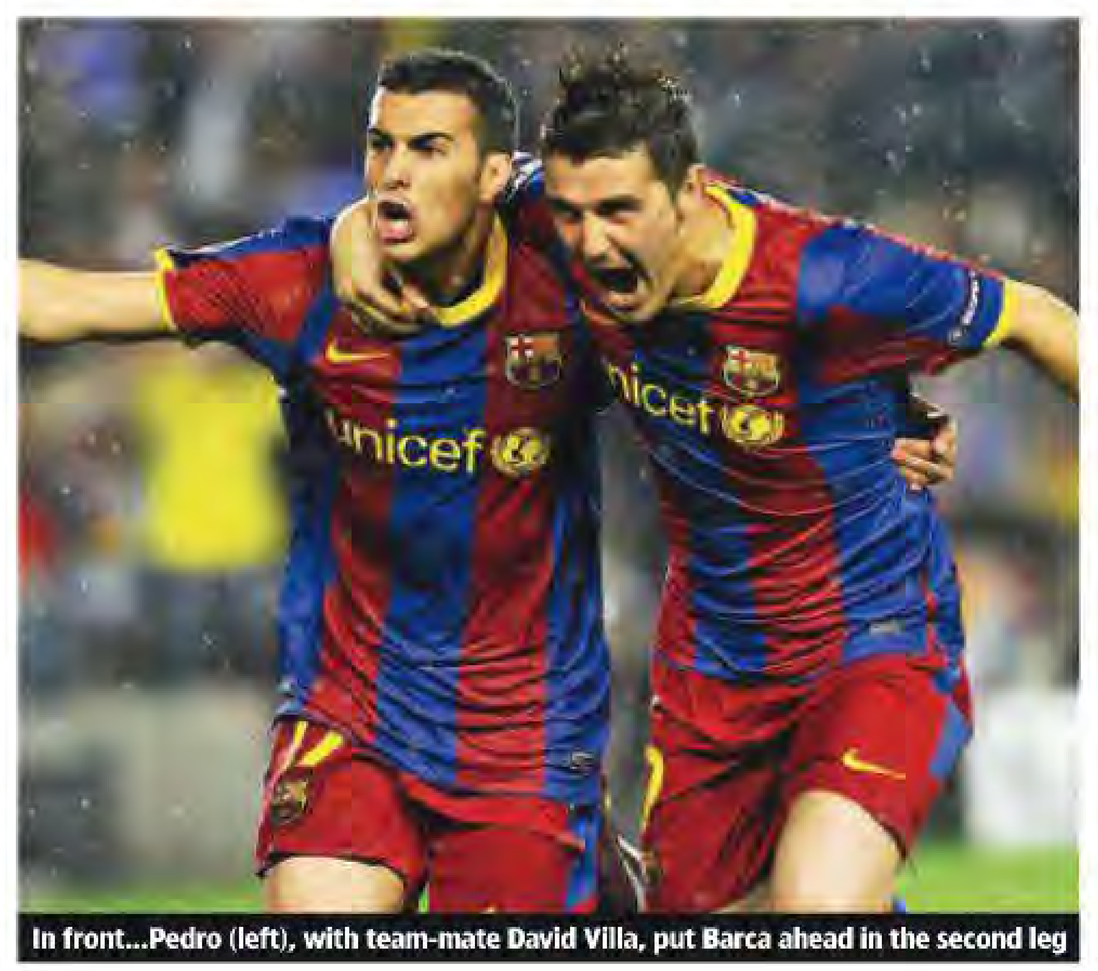
Ronaldo chipped in, adding: "We knew it. It is very hard to fight against this. Something is happening. It makes you think. This was a mission impossible."

The focus on the goal did not note that a couple of Madrid players had been fortunate to stay on the pitch – Ricardo Carvalho especially.

For Madrid, Barcelona were immoral cheats. For Barcelona, the opposite was true: they had upheld the values of sport. Up in the directors' box, Barcelona president Sandro Rosell insisted: "Football was the winner. This is a victory for Barcelona's values."

Dani Alves called Madrid "bad losers". Only one team, Barca said, had tried to play football. Others also attacked Mourinho, with even Alfredo Di Stefano bemoaning the Madrid coach's approach in the league game, saying Real were a mouse to Barcelona's lions.

And that was it in a nutshell. In the end, for all the events, for all the action, for all the tension and the arguments, the narrative was boiled down to two things: the referee and the footballing approach. Both sides presented their cases as if convinced. Both ignored evidence against them. Both found evidence for them. Mourinho would point to the way the Spanish Cup Final went: at times in the second half Barcelona dominated but an extremely



In front...Pedro (left), with team-mate David Villa, put Barca ahead in the second leg

## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL

aggressive Madrid side won 1-0, and had as many chances, largely getting the better of the first half.

**Defensive and aggressive**

Mourinho would argue that, but for the referee, his side might have got through in the Champions League. Others argued that but for his approach they might have done. Madrid were defensive and aggressive in the first leg, ceding possession to Barcelona.

Never before had a home team had so little of the ball, nor waited so deep. Still less one with the resources Madrid boast – Karim Benzema, Higuain, Emmanuel Adebayor and Kaka were on the bench. Madrid created no chances.

Whether they needed to was another issue. Besides, after the red card, why was there no reaction from Mourinho? Was holding out with 10 impossible?

Then, in the second leg, Madrid stepped up and pressured higher. There was a greater sense of danger and menace about them. But, bit by bit, Barcelona dominated. By half-time it was 7-0 in chances. Goalkeeper Iker Casillas had saved Madrid. Madrid could complain about the referee, said the critics, but after Barcelona's goals they would have needed three goals. They did not have three shots on target.

And if they had looked like a stronger side, the question was inevitable: why did they not play the same way at home? Not least because Barcelona had no natural left-back and had Javier Mascherano at centre-back. They had tired. David Villa and Pedro appeared to be struggling. In the first leg, they were without Andres Iniesta. When you pressure high, you can make it harder for Barcelona to exercise control. But if they can ride that first wave of pressure, they do find the pitch opening up before them.

Even those arguments ended up supporting Mourinho's thesis to an extent.

With Madrid adopting a defensive approach, Barca had created little – how much desire they had shown to create, playing away, was another question; after all, some teams defend with position, Barcelona defend with possession – but with Madrid adopting a more adventurous approach Barcelona had created more? How should you play against them? An ethical issue had been made from a tactical one.

> Mourinho said that, but for the ref, his side might have gone through. Others argued that but for his approach they might have

Mourinho's only concern was winning, as he had done with Internazionale last year. When that became impossible he talked conspiracy, seeking to excuse defeat. He heightened an argument he had been making all season. His defensive approach was the right idea, his supporters said. Earlier in the season, Barcelona had scored five when Madrid played higher up the pitch. Was opening up suicide?

That is the question that Manchester United must now face. How do they stop Barcelona's possession?

To use Alex Ferguson's phrase, how do they prevent Iniesta and Xavi getting them on the "carousel"? How do they do damage to the back four? How do they stop Messi – arguably the one player to have come out of the *clasico* series with his already wonderful reputation enhanced?

After all, amid all the drama, the end-of-days feel to it, amid the sense of relief and celebration in Catalonia, one thing seemed to have been forgotten: for Barcelona, there is still one more game to go.

In the thick of it... Barcelona's Busquets gets involved at the heart of the action with Real Madrid's Xabi Alonso (left) and Marcelo, while Guardiola looks on from the sidelines



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# CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL
# VAN DER SAR'S DATE WITH DESTINY

Final farewell...the Champions League showdown will be Van der Sar's last-ever game

The stage is set for a fantastic finale to the European season as Barcelona and Manchester United meet at Wembley in a repeat of the 2009 Final, when the Catalans triumphed 2-0 in Rome's Olympic stadium.

It is only the third time that two former finalists have met again in the Final: Ajax and Juventus (1973 and 1996) and Milan and Benfica (1963 and 1990) are the only previous two cases in the 56-year history of the competition.

There are other intriguing parallels between Barcelona and United.

Both clubs are back at Wembley Stadium, the scene of their first European Cup triumphs: United's over Benfica in 1968 and Barcelona's over Sampdoria in 1992.

Both clubs are also chasing their fourth European Cup and victory will bring parity with four-times winners Bayern Munich and Ajax.

When United won the European Cup for a third time, after beating Chelsea on penalties in Moscow in 2008, manager Alex Ferguson insisted that his quest for European glory was not yet over and spoke of his desire to join the "pantheon of European greats" by winning a fourth European crown.

United failed a year later in Rome, but Ferguson now has an opportunity to avenge that defeat. If he and his United side are to do that, they must win both the mental and tactical battles.

In his bid to convince his players that they can beat a Barcelona side that has been hailed as the greatest club side of all time, Ferguson can call upon goalkeeper Edwin Van der Sar for inspiration.

Van der Sar is preparing for a fifth European Cup Final, having played for Ajax in 1995 and 1996, and United in 2008 and 2009. At the age of 40, the Wembley Final will be his last professional game before retirement.

"His career has been absolutely fantastic," said Ferguson of the Holland international. "It is not just what he does on the football field. It is how he handles himself as a professional and a human being. It doesn't happen often.

"In our dressing room at half-time and before games, he is absolutely outstanding."

Despite Van der Sar's declared intention to retire, there have been calls for him to continue. But Ferguson believes the Dutchman should go out on a high.

"Right now, I would say retire," says Ferguson. "He is at the absolute pinnacle of his career but sometimes, when a player gets to that age, age comes onto you very suddenly. I wouldn't want to see Edwin Van der Sar in that situation. He deserves to go out at the very top and hopefully he does that.

"My advice to him is that this is the time. There is no reason for him to risk another year and maybe drop below his standard."

It is a standard that few other players have been able to match.

***Gavin Hamilton***

## EUROPEAN CUP WINNERS

**NINE TITLES**
Real Madrid

**SEVEN**
Milan

**FIVE**
Liverpool

**FOUR**
Ajax
Bayern Munich

**THREE**
BARCELONA
Internazionale
MANCHESTER UTD

**TWO**
Benfica
Juventus
Nottingham Forest
Porto

**ONE**
Aston Villa, Celtic, Borussia Dortmund, Feyenoord, Hamburg, Marseille, PSV Eindhoven, Red Star Belgrade, Steaua Bucharest

Still waiting...Real Madrid's last title was in 2002

First time...Barca's first title was at Wembley in 1992

The start...Bobby Charlton scores for United in 1968

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# BARCELONA

## THE COACH

### Pep GUARDIOLA

**Age 40 (18.01.71)**
A European Cup-winner with Barcelona in 1992. Replaced Frank Rijkaard as coach in June 2008 after a year in charge of Barca B.

## TACTICS

If Abidal is not passed fit, Puyol will move across to left-back and Masherano would come in alongside Pique as a makeshift centre-back. A lack of experience in reserve up front means that the most likely attacking change is Iniesta is Iniesta being pushed further forward with Keita taking his place in midfield.

## GOALKEEPER

**Victor VALDES**

**Age 29 (14.01.82)**
Youth-team product who has played 11 times for Catalonia and three games for Spain. Made his Barca debut in 2002.

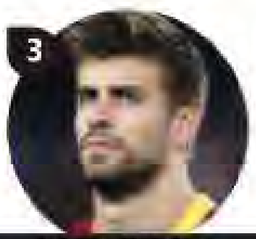
## DEFENDERS

**Eric ABIDAL**

**Age 31 (11.09.79)**
France left-back who can also play in the centre. Recently returned to action after the removal of a tumour from his liver

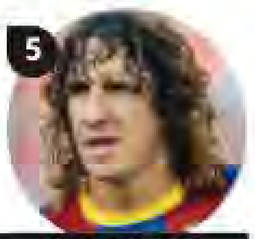
**DANI ALVES**

**Age 28 (06.05.83)**
Brazil international right-back who loves to rampage forward and join the attack. Signed from Sevilla in 2008 for £30m.



**Gerard PIQUE**

**Age 24 (02.02.87)**
Came through the Barca youth system but signed with Manchester United before returning to Barca in 2008.



**Carles PUYOL**

**Age 33 (13.04.78)**
Shaggy-haired captain who made his Barcelona debut in 1999. A European and world champion with Spain.

## MIDFIELDERS

**Sergio BUSQUETS**

**Age 22 (16.07.88)**
Defensive midfielder who can also drop back into defence. His father, Carles, was a Barca keeper in the 1990s.

**Andres INIESTA**

**Age 27 (11.05.84)**
Softly spoken, hugely influential World Cup-winner who has played a deeper role this season. Barca debut in 2002.

**Seydou KEITA**

**Age 31 (16.01.80)**
Mali international who is mostly used as a a substitute to consolidate a winning position. Signed from Sevilla in 2008.

**Javier MASCHERANO**

**Age 26 (08.06.84)**
Captain of Argentina, signed from Liverpool last summer. Has been used as an emergency centre-back.

**XAVI**

**Age 31 (25.01.80)**
*World Soccer's* 2010 World Player of the Year. A world and European champion with Spain. Barca debut in 1998.

## FORWARDS

**Ibrahim AFELLAY**

**Age 25 (02.04.86)**
Holland international who was a surprise signing from PSV in January 2011. Has mostly been used as an impact sub.

**Lionel MESSI**

**Age 23 (24.06.87)**
The world's best player has scored more than 50 goals in all competitions this season. Moved to Barcelona as a teen.

**PEDRO**

**Age 23 (28.07.87)**
Spain international, promoted from Barca B in 2008. Last year he became the first player to score in six different competitions.

**David VILLA**

**Age 29 (03.12.81)**
A prolific goalscorer for Valencia and Spain before he joined Barcelona in a £34m deal last summer.

## THE ROAD TO WEMBLEY

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 14.09.10 | Panathinaikos (h) | 5-1 |
| 29.09.10 | Rubin (a) | 1-1 |
| 20.10.10 | Copenhagen (h) | 2-0 |
| 02.11.10 | Copenhagen (a) | 1-1 |
| 24.11.10 | Panathinaikos (a) | 3-0 |
| 07.12.10 | Rubin (h) | 2-0 |
| 16.02.11 | Arsenal (a) | 1-2 |
| 08.03.11 | Arsenal (h) | 3-1 |
| 06.04.11 | Shakhtar Donetsk (h) | 5-1 |
| 12.04.11 | Shakhtar Donetsk (a) | 1-0 |
| 27.04.11 | Real Madrid (a) | 2-0 |
| 03.05.11 | Real Madrid (h) | 1-1 |

### APPEARANCES (minutes)

**Twelve** Lionel Messi (957 mins)
**Eleven** Dani Alves (990 mins), Sergio Busquets (990 mins), Gerard Pique (937 mins), David Villa (857 mins), Xavi (863 mins), Pedro (682 mins)
**Ten** Victor Valdes (900 mins), Javier Mascherano (789 mins)
**Nine** Andres Iniesta (808 mins), Seydou Keita (420 mins)
**Seven** Carles Puyol (630 mins), Eric Abidal (469 mins), Maxwell (371 mins)
**Six** Adriano (424 mins)
**Five** Ibrahim Afellay (119 mins)
**Three** Bojan Krkic (60 mins)
**Two** Jose Pinto (180 mins), Gabriel Milito (35 mins), Jeffren (28 mins)
**One** Andreu Fontas (90 mins), Thiago Alcantara (90 mins), Victor Vasquez (77 mins), Jonathan Dos Santos (63 mins), Marc Bartra (55 mins), Sergi Roberto (1 min)

### GOALS

**Eleven** Lionel Messi
**Four** Pedro
**Three** David Villa
**Two** Dani Alves, Xavi
**One** Andreu Fontas, Andres Iniesta, Seydou Keita, Gerard Pique, Victor Vazquez

## OTHERS IN CONTENTION

Oier OLAZABAL is the reserve keeper as Jose PINTO is suspended. Argentina's Gabriel MILITO is a defensive reserve, along with Brazilian full-back MAXWELL, who is struggling for fitness. ADRIANO Correia can play across defence and midfield, while midfielder THIAGO Alcantara and forward JEFFREN are the youngsters who are most likely to make the bench. BOJAN Krkic is injured and will miss the Final.

# MANCHESTER UNITED

## THE MANAGER

### Alex FERGUSON

**Age 69 (31.12.41)**
Record-breaking Scottish manager who has been in charge of the club since moving from Aberdeen in 1986. Belligerent and argumentative but a brilliant motivator and shrewd tactician.

## GOALKEEPER

1

**Edwin VAN DER SAR**

**Age 40 (29.10.70)**
Holland international who won the European Cup with Ajax in 1995 and will retire after the Wembley Final. Joined from Fulham in 2005.

## TACTICS

Plenty of questions for Alex Ferguson. Does he try to emulate Barca's formation with a 4-3-3 or 4-5-1 with Rooney as the central striker? Or does he play Rooney behind Hernandez in a more ambitious 4-4-2? He must also decide between Rafael and the more defensive-minded O'Shea.

## DEFENDERS

3

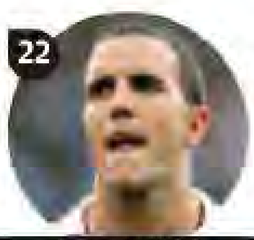
**Patrice EVRA**

**Age 30 (15.05.81)**
France left-back, a key figure in French player protests at last summer's World Cup. Joined from Monaco in 2006.

5

**Rio FERDINAND**

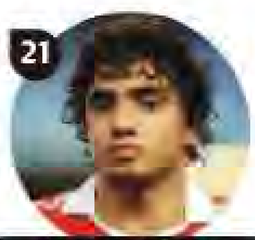
**Age 32 (07.11.78)**
England captain and ball-playing centre-back. Troubled by injury in recent seasons but still has a vital role to play.



22

**John O'SHEA**

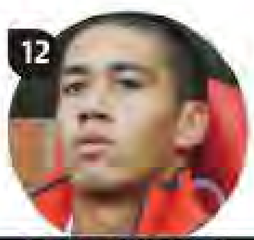
**Age 30 (30.04.81)**
Versatile Republic of Ireland international who was captain in the semi-final home leg. Made United debut in 1998.



21

**RAFAEL da Silva**

**Age 20 (09.07.90)**
Brazilian right-back, twin of Fabio, who was sent off in last season's quarter-final. Joined from Fluminense in 2008



12

**Chris SMALLING**

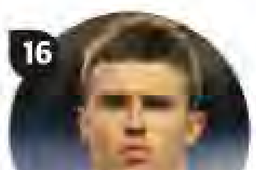
**Age 21 (22.11.89)**
Raw but talented centre-back signed from Fulham last summer after just one season in the Premier League.

15

**Nemanja VIDIC**

**Age 29 (21.10.81)**
Serbia international and one of Europe's best defenders this season. Joined from Spartak Moscow in 2006.

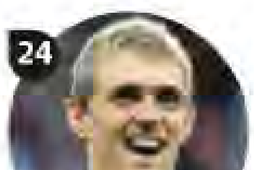
## MIDFIELDERS



16

**Michael CARRICK**

**Age 29 (28.07.81)**
England international who is one of United's best central midfield passers. Joined from Tottenham Hotspur in 2006.



24

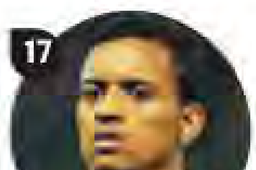
**Darren FLETCHER**

**Age 27 (01.02.84)**
Combative Scotland international who missed the 2009 Final through suspension. United debut in 2001.

11

**Ryan GIGGS**

**Age 37 (29.11.73)**
Veteran winger who attributes his longevity to yoga and clean living. United's all-time record appearance holder.



17

**NANI**

**Age 24 (17.11.86)**
Portuguese winger who joined from Sporting Lisbon in summer 2007. In excellent form this season.

13

**PARK Ji-sung**

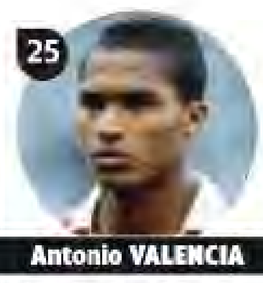
**Age 30 (25.02.81)**
South Korea international who became the first Asian player to win the European Cup in 2008.

18

**Paul SCHOLES**

**Age 36 (16.11.74)**
Veteran midfielder and one-club man who missed the 1999 Final through suspension. No longer first choice.

## MIDFIELDERS



25

**Antonio VALENCIA**

**Age 25 (04.08.85)**
Ecuador international who joined from Wigan Athletic in 2009. Recently recovered from a serious ankle injury.

## FORWARDS

9

**Dimitar BERBATOV**

**Age 30 (30.01.81)**
Bulgaria international signed from Tottenham Hotspur for a fee of £30.75m in 2008. Most effective in a deep lying position.

14

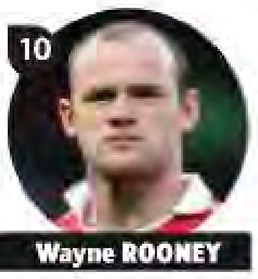
**Javier HERNANDEZ**

**Age 22 (01.06.88)**
Mexico international who joined from Guadalajara last summer for £6m. Nickname Chicharito ("Little Pea").

7

**Michael OWEN**

**Age 31 (14.12.79)**
The last Englishman to win the European Football of the Year award, in 2001. Troubled by injuries in recent years.



10

**Wayne ROONEY**

**Age 25 (24.10.85)**
United's talisman, a key figure for club and country who considered joining Manchester City earlier this season.

## THE ROAD TO WEMBLEY

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 14.09.10 | Rangers (h) | 0-0 |
| 29.09.10 | Valencia (a) | 1-0 |
| 20.10.10 | Bursaspor (h) | 1-0 |
| 02.11.10 | Bursaspor (a) | 3-0 |
| 24.11.10 | Rangers (a) | 1-0 |
| 07.12.10 | Valencia (h) | 1-1 |
| 23.02.11 | Marseille (a) | 0-0 |
| 15.03.11 | Marseille (h) | 2-1 |
| 06.04.11 | Chelsea (a) | 1-0 |
| 12.04.11 | Chelsea (h) | 2-1 |
| 26.04.11 | Schalke (a) | 2-0 |
| 04.05.11 | Schalke (h) | 4-1 |

### APPEARANCES (minutes)

**Eleven games** Nani (730 mins)
**Ten** Michael Carrick (900 mins)
**Nine** Edwin Van der Sar (810 mins), Patrice Evra (741 mins), Chris Smalling (671 mins)
**Eight** Nemanja Vidic (720 mins), Wayne Rooney (713 mins), Park Ji-sung (641 mins), Javier Hernandez (460 mins)
**Seven** Dimitar Berbatov (520 mins), Rafael (504 mins), Ryan Giggs (486 mins), Darren Fletcher (441 mins)
**Six** Rio Ferdinand (500 mins), John O'Shea (398 mins), Antonio Valencia (376 mins), Anderson (375 mins), Fabio (375 mins), Paul Scholes (354 mins)
**Three** Darron Gibson (253 mins), Johnny Evans (194 mins), Gabriel Obertan (122 mins)
**Two** Tomasz Kuszczak (180 mins), Wes Brown (180 mins), Federico Macheda (95 mins), Michael Owen (27 minutes)
**One** Ben Amos (90 mins), Bebe (27 mins)

### GOALS

**Four** Javier Hernandez
**Three** Anderson, Wayne Rooney
**One** Bebe, Darren Fletcher, Darron Gibson, Ryan Giggs, Nani, Gabriel Obertan, Park Ji-sung, Antonio Valencia

## OTHERS IN CONTENTION

Tomas KUSZCZAK is the likely second-choice keeper, while Jonny EVANS is a reserve option in defence, where FABIO is the second choice left-back. Brazilian midfieler ANDERSON is playing his way back into contention after a serious knee injury and a car crash in the past year. Darron GIBSON is a combative option for central midfield while French wideman Gabriel OBERTAN is a long-shot.

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# ESM TEAM OF THE MONTH MARCH 2011

European Sports Media

## HOW IT WORKS

Every month, journalists from each member of the European Sports Media group vote for their first XI from Europe's top competitions. For details of how each ESM member voted this month, visit www.worldsoccer.com/esm11

## SEASON RANKINGS

Cumulative votes through the season

### GOALKEEPERS

| | |
|---|---|
| Victor Valdes (Barcelona) | 13 |
| Edwin Van der Sar (Man United) | 9 |
| Petr Cech (Chelsea) | 8 |
| Roman Weidenfeller (B Dortmund) | 7 |
| Iker Casillas (Real Madrid) | 7 |
| Manuel Neuer (Schalke) | 5 |
| Steeve Elana (Brest) | 3 |
| Heurelho Gomes (Tottenham H) | 2 |
| Thomas Kraft (Bayern Munich) | 2 |
| Steve Mandanda (Marseille) | 2 |
| Fernando Muslera (Lazio) | 2 |
| Maarten Stekelenburg (Ajax) | 2 |
| Rene Adler (Leverkusen) | 1 |
| Daniel Aranzubia (Deportivo) | 1 |
| Cesar Sanchez (Valencia) | 1 |
| David De Gea (Atletico) | 1 |
| Morgan De Sanctis (Napoli) | 1 |
| Craig Gordon (Sunderland) | 1 |
| Julio Cesar (Internazionale) | 1 |
| Michael Rensing (Koln) | 1 |
| Wojciech Szczesny (Arsenal) | 1 |

### DEFENDERS

| | |
|---|---|
| Nemanja Vidic (Man United) | 25 |
| Mats Hummels (B Dortmund) | 21 |
| Dani Alves (Barcelona) | 19 |
| Gareth Bale (Tottenham H) | 17 |
| Gerard Pique (Barcelona) | 13 |
| Thiago Silva (Milan) | 10 |
| Marcelo (Real Madrid) | 9 |
| Carles Puyol (Barcelona) | 9 |
| John Terry (Chelsea) | 9 |
| Branislav Ivanovic (Chelsea) | 8 |
| Vincent Kompany (Man City) | 8 |
| Patrice Evra (Man United) | 7 |
| Eric Abidal (Barcelona) | 5 |
| Ashley Cole (Chelsea) | 5 |
| Lucio (Internazionale) | 4 |
| Ricardo Carvalho (Real Madrid) | 4 |
| Bacary Sagna (Arsenal) | 4 |
| Neven Subotic (B Dortmund) | 4 |
| David Luiz (Chelsea) | 3 |
| Maicon (Internazionale) | 3 |
| Nicolas Otamendi (Porto) | 3 |
| Sergio Ramos (Real Madrid) | 3 |
| Leighton Baines (Everton) | 2 |
| Giorgio Chiellini (Juventus) | 2 |
| Gael Clichy (Arsenal) | 2 |
| Benedikt Howedes (Schalke) | 2 |
| Juan (Roma) | 2 |
| Younes Kaboul (Tottenham H) | 2 |
| Stephan Lichtsteiner (Lazio) | 2 |
| Philippe Mexes (Roma) | 2 |
| Alessandro Nesta (Milan) | 2 |
| Pepe (Real Madrid) | 2 |
| Adil Rami (Lille) | 2 |
| Marcel Schmelzer (B Dortmund) | 2 |
| Chris Smalling (Man United) | 2 |
| Darijo Srna (Shakhtar) | 2 |
| Javier Zanetti (Internazionale) | 2 |
| Adriano Correia (Barcelona) | 1 |
| Alex (Chelsea) | 1 |
| Alvaro Arbeloa (Real Madrid) | 1 |
| Bruno Alves (Zenit) | 1 |
| Dmytro Chygrynskiy (Shakhtar) | 1 |
| Michael Dawson (Tottenham H) | 1 |
| Mathieu Debuchy (Lille) | 1 |
| Maurizio Domizzi (Udinese) | 1 |
| Fabio Coentrao (Benfica) | 1 |
| Rio Ferdinand (Man United) | 1 |
| Christian Fuchs (Mainz) | 1 |
| Martin Kelly (Liverpool) | 1 |
| Aleksandar Kolarov (Man City) | 1 |
| Laurent Koscielny (Arsenal) | 1 |
| Kader Mangane (Rennes) | 1 |
| Alvaro Pereira (Porto) | 1 |
| Zdenek Pospech (Copenhagen) | 1 |
| Rafael (Man United) | 1 |
| Andrea Ranocchia (Internazionale) | 1 |
| Victor Ruiz (Espanyol) | 1 |
| Walter Samuel (Internazionale) | 1 |
| Sebastien Squillaci (Arsenal) | 1 |
| Kolo Toure (Man City) | 1 |
| Benoit Tremoulinas (Bordeaux) | 1 |

### MIDFIELDERS

| | |
|---|---|
| Xavi (Barcelona) | 28 |
| Andres Iniesta (Barcelona) | 18 |
| Nuri Sahin (B Dortmund) | 18 |
| Mesut Ozil (Real Madrid) | 13 |
| Samir Nasri (Arsenal) | 12 |
| Eden Hazard (Lille) | 8 |
| Nani (Man United) | 8 |
| Arjen Robben (Bayern Munich) | 8 |
| Cesc Fabregas (Arsenal) | 7 |
| Wesley Sneijder (Internazionale) | 7 |
| Rafael Van der Vaart (Tottenham H) | 7 |
| Lewis Holtby (Mainz) | 6 |
| Shinji Kagawa (B Dortmund) | 6 |
| Alexis Sanchez (Udinese) | 6 |
| Jack Wilshere (Arsenal) | 6 |
| Florent Malouda (Chelsea) | 4 |
| Alex Song (Arsenal) | 4 |
| Michael Essien (Chelsea) | 3 |
| Mario Gotze (B Dortmund) | 3 |
| Hernanes (Lazio) | 3 |
| Willian (Shakhtar) | 3 |
| Michel Bastos (Lyon) | 2 |
| Sven Bender (B Dortmund) | 2 |
| Carlos Busquets (Barcelona) | 2 |
| Esteban Cambiasso (Internazionale) | 2 |
| Ryan Giggs (Man United) | 2 |
| Raul Meireles (Liverpool) | 2 |
| Nene (Paris Saint-Germain) | 2 |
| Javier Pastore (Palermo) | 2 |
| Franck Ribery (Bayern Munich) | 2 |
| Bastian Schweinsteiger (B Munich) | 2 |
| Arturo Vidal (Leverkusen) | 2 |
| Xabi Alonso (Real Madrid) | 2 |
| Angel Di Maria (Real Madrid) | 1 |
| Lassana Diarra (Real Madrid) | 1 |
| Douglas Costa (Shakhtar Donetsk) | 1 |
| Kevin Grosskreutz (B Dortmund) | 1 |
| Pablo Hernandez (Valencia) | 1 |
| Gennaro Gattuso (Milan) | 1 |
| Fredy Guarin (Porto) | 1 |
| Theo Janssen (Twente) | 1 |
| Luiz Gustavo (Bayern Munich) | 1 |
| Juan Mata (Valencia) | 1 |
| Thiago Motta (Internazionale) | 1 |
| Dani Parejo (Getafe) | 1 |
| Park Ji-sung (Man United) | 1 |
| Sergio Pinto (Hannover) | 1 |
| Andrea Pirlo (Milan) | 1 |
| David Silva (Man City) | 1 |
| Anatoliy Tymoschuk (Bayern Munich) | 1 |
| Yaya Toure (Man City) | 1 |
| Borja Valero (Villarreal) | 1 |

### FORWARDS

| | |
|---|---|
| Lionel Messi (Barcelona) | 54 |
| Samuel Eto'o (Internazionale) | 21 |
| Cristiano Ronaldo (Real Madrid) | 20 |
| Edinson Cavani (Napoli) | 15 |
| Dimitar Berbatov (Man United) | 12 |
| Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Milan) | 12 |
| Mario Gomez (Bayern Munich) | 11 |
| Pedro (Barcelona) | 11 |
| Wayne Rooney (Man United) | 10 |
| Robin Van Persie (Arsenal) | 8 |
| Karim Benzema (Real Madrid) | 5 |
| Antonio Di Natale (Udinese) | 5 |
| David Villa (Barcelona) | 5 |
| Javier Hernandez (Man United) | 3 |
| Luis Suarez (Ajax/Liverpool) | 3 |
| Nicolas Anelka (Chelsea) | 2 |
| Lucas Barrios (B Dortmund) | 2 |
| Marouane Chamakh (Arsenal) | 2 |
| Didier Drogba (Chelsea) | 2 |
| Theofanis Gekas (E Frankfurt) | 2 |
| Hulk (Porto) | 2 |
| Dirk Kuyt (Liverpool) | 2 |
| Nilmar (Villarreal) | 2 |
| Raul (Schalke) | 2 |
| Andre Schurrle (Mainz) | 2 |
| Papiss Cisse (Freiburg) | 1 |
| Peter Crouch (Tottenham H) | 1 |
| Johan Elmander (Bolton W) | 1 |
| Kevin Gameiro (Lorient) | 1 |
| Lucho Gonzalez (Marseille) | 1 |
| Gonzalo Higuain (Real Madrid) | 1 |
| Jose Antonio Reyes (Atletico Madrid) | 1 |
| Giuseppe Rossi (Villarreal) | 1 |
| Moussa Sow (Lille) | 1 |
| Daniel Sturridge (Bolton W) | 1 |
| Carlos Tevez (Man City) | 1 |
| Mirko Vucinic (Roma) | 1 |



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BELGIUM

### New league leaders

Genk came from behind to beat Club Brugge 3-1 and go top of the Championship play-off table.

Standard Liege will meet Westerlo in the Belgian Cup Final on May 21 after beating holders Gent in the semi-finals. Having lost the away leg 1-0, Standard hit back with goals from Jelle Van Damme, Mohammed Tchite (two) and Mehdi Carcela-Gonzalez to win the return 4-2. Westerlo beat Cercle Brugge on away goals after drawing 3-3.

BULGARIA

### Cup shock for Lovech

Runaway league leaders Litex Lovech lost 2-1 to CSKA Sofia in the semi-finals of the Bulgarian Cup. Two goals from Spas Delev mean CSKA face Slavia Sofia - who beat Pirin Blagoevgrad on penalties - in the Final on May 25.

CROATIA

### Zagreb's six in a row

Dinamo Zagreb clinched their sixth successive league championship with a 1-0 win over Osijek.

Cup upset...Litex lost to CSKA

**25 seconds on the clock when Dejan Stankovic scored the Champions League's fifth-fastest goal ever, for Internazionale against Schalke**

# Club Results

## EUROPE

### CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

#### Quarter-finals

1st legs

*Apr 5*
**Internazionale (Ita) 2** (Stankovic 1, Milito 33)
**Schalke (Ger) 5** (Matip 17, Edu 40, 75, Raul 53, Ranocchia og 57)
**HT:** 2-2. **Att:** 72,770. **Ref:** Atkinson (Eng)
**Inter:** Julio Cesar - Maicon, Ranocchia, Chivu, Zanetti, Thiago Motta (Nagatomo 76), Stankovic (Kharja 24; Cordoba 63), Cambiasso, Sneijder, Milito, Eto'o. *Sent off: Chivu 62min.*
**Schalke:** Neuer - Uchida, Howedes, Matip, Sarpei, Papadopoulos, Jurado (Draxler 83), Farfan, Baumjohann (Schmitz 76), Edu, Raul (Karimi 87).

*Apr 5*
**Real Madrid (Spa) 4** (Adebayor 4, 57, Di Maria 72, Cristiano Ronaldo 87)
**Tottenham Hotspur (Eng) 0**
**HT:** 1-0. **Att:** 71,657. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)
**Real Madrid:** Casillas - Sergio Ramos, Pepe, Ricardo Carvalho, Marcelo, Khedira (L Diarra 61), Xabi Alonso, Di Maria (Kaka 77), Ozil, Cristiano Ronaldo, Adebayor (Higuain 75).
**Tottenham:** Gomes - Corluka (Bassong 80), Gallas, Dawson, Assou-Ekotto, Jenas, Sandro, Modric, Van der Vaart (Defoe 46), Bale, Crouch.
*Sent off: Crouch 15min.*

*Apr 6*
**Barcelona (Spa) 5** (Iniesta 2, Daniel Alves 34, Pique 53, Keita 61, Xavi 86)
**Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) 1** (Rakytskyi 60)
**HT:** 2-0. **Att:** 86,518. **Ref:** Thomson (Sco)
**Barcelona:** Valdes - Daniel Alves, Pique, Busquets, Adriano (Maxwell 77), Xavi, Mascherano, Keita, Villa (Pedro 70), Messi, Iniesta (Afellay 90+1).
**Shakhtar:** Pyatov - Srna, Ischenko, Rakytskyi, Rat, Mkhitaryan, Hubschman (Eduardo 82), Douglas Costa, Jadson (Fernandinho 70), Willian (Alex Teixeira 75), Luiz Adriano.

*Apr 6*
**Chelsea (Eng) 0**
**Manchester United (Eng) 1** (Rooney 24)
**HT:** 0-1. **Att:** 37,915. **Ref:** Undiano Mallenco (Spa)
**Chelsea:** Cech - Bosingwa (Mikel 79), Ivanovic, Terry, Cole, Essien, Ramires, Lampard, Zhirkov (Malouda 70), Fernando Torres, Drogba (Anelka 70).
**Man United:** Van der Sar - Rafael (Nani 51), Ferdinand, Vidic, Evra, Valencia, Carrick, Park (Smalling 90+4), Giggs, Rooney, Hernandez (Berbatov 78).

2nd legs

*Apr 12*
**Manchester United 2** (Hernandez 43, Park 78)
**Chelsea 1** (Drogba 77)
**HT:** 1-0. **Att:** 74,672. **Ref:** Benquerenca (Por)
*Manchester United 3-1 on agg*
**Man United:** Van der Sar - O'Shea, Ferdinand, Vidic, Evra, Nani (Valencia 75), Carrick, Giggs, Park, Rooney, Hernandez.
**Chelsea:** Cech - Ivanovic, Alex (Paulo Ferreira 82), Terry, Cole, Ramires, Essien, Lampard, Anelka (Kalou 61), Fernando Torres (Drogba 46), Malouda.
*Sent off: Ramires 70min.*

*Apr 12*
**Shakhtar Donetsk 0**
**Barcelona 1** (Messi 43)
**HT:** 0-1. **Att:** 51,759. **Ref:** Meyer (Ger)
*Barcelona 6-1 on agg*
**Shakhtar:** Pyatov - Kobin, Ischenko, Rakytskyi, Shevchuk, Mkhitaryan, Hubschman (Fernandinho 75), Douglas Costa (Eduardo 58), Jadson, Willian, Luiz Adriano (Moreno 66).
**Barcelona:** Valdes - Daniel Alves, Mascherano, Pique (Milito 70), Adriano, Xavi (Pedro 66), Busquets, Keita, Villa (Jeffren 75), Messi, Afellay.

*Apr 13*
**Schalke 2** (Raul 45, Howedes 81)
**Internazionale 1** (Thiago Motta 49)
**HT:** 1-0. **Att:** 54,142. **Ref:** Skomina (Sln)
*Schalke 7-3 on agg*
**Schalke:** Neuer - Uchida, Howedes, Metzelder, Sarpei, Papadopoulos, Matip, Baumjohann (Draxler 73), Jurado (Schmitz 87), Edu (Charisteas 77), Raul.
**Inter:** Julio Cesar - Maicon, Lucio, Ranocchia, Nagatomo, Thiago Motta, Zanetti, Stankovic (Pandev 46), Sneijder (Coutinho 80), Milito, Eto'o.

*Apr 13*
**Tottenham Hotspur 0**
**Real Madrid 1** (Cristiano Ronaldo 50)
**HT:** 0-0. **Att:** 34,311. **Ref:** Rizzoli (Ita)
*Real Madrid 5-0 on agg*
**Tottenham:** Gomes - Corluka, Gallas, Dawson, Assou-Ekotto, Lennon (Defoe 61), Huddlestone (Sandro 71), Modric (Kranjcar 83), Bale, Van der Vaart, Pavlyuchenko.
**Real Madrid:** Casillas - Sergio Ramos (Granero 57), Albiol, Ricardo Carvalho, Arbeloa, Khedira, Xabi Alonso (Benzema 75), Cristiano Ronaldo (Kaka 65), Ozil, Marcelo, Adebayor.

### EUROPA LEAGUE

#### Quarter-finals

1st legs

*(all Apr 7)*
**Benfica (Por) 4** (Aimar 37, Salvio 45, 52, Saviola 90+4)
**PSV Eindhoven (Hol) 1** (Labyad 80)
**HT:** 2-0. **Att:** 60,026. **Ref:** Tagliavento (Ita)

**Dynamo Kyiv (Ukr) 1** (Yarmolenko 6)
**Braga (Por) 1** (Husiev og 13)
**HT:** 1-1. **Att:** 16,000. **Ref:** Kuipers (Hol)
*Sent off: Shevchenko (Dynamo) 62min*

**Porto (Por) 5** (Falcao 37, 84, 90+2, Silvestre Varela 65, D Kombarov og 70)
**Spartak Moscow (Rus) 1** (K Kombarov 71)
**HT:** 1-0. **Att:** 38,209. **Ref:** Gumienny (Blg)

**Villarreal (Spa) 5** (Marchena 23, Borja Valero 43, Nilmar 45+1, 81, Rossi 55)
**Twente Enschede (Hol) 1** (Janko 90+1)
**HT:** 3-0. **Att:** 22,000. **Ref:** Nikolaev (Rus)

2nd legs

*(all Apr 14)*
**Braga 0**
**Dynamo Kyiv 0**
**Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Eriksson (Swe)
*Sent off: Paulo Cesar (Braga) 29min; Popov (Dynamo) 87min*
*Agg 1-1. Braga on away goals*

**PSV Eindhoven 2** (Dzsudzsak 17, Lens 25)
**Benfica 2** (Luisao 45+2, Cardozo pen 63)
**HT:** 2-1. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Stark (Ger)
*Benfica 6-3 on agg*

**Spartak Moscow 2** (Dzyuba 52, Ari 72)
**Porto 5** (Hulk 28, Rodriguez 45+2, Guarin 47, Falcao 54, Ruben Micael 89)
**HT:** 0-2. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Kassai (Hun)
*Porto 10-3 on agg*

**Twente Enschede 1** (Bajrami 32)
**Villarreal 3** (Rossi pen 60, Marco Ruben pen 84, Cani 90)
**HT:** 1-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Collum (Sco)
*Sent off: Tiendalli (Twente) 58min*
*Villarreal 8-2 on agg*

### AUSTRIA

Apr 2: Ried 1 Mattersburg 1; Sturm 3 Rapid 3; Wiener Neustadt 2 Wacker 2; Austria 2 Kapfenberger 0.
Apr 3: LASK 1 Salzburg 1.
Apr 9: Salzburg 0 LASK 1; Mattersburg 2 Ried 2; Wacker 1 Wiener Neustadt 0; Rapid 0 Sturm 2.
Apr 10: Kapfenberger 3 Austria 3.
Apr 16: LASK 0 Kapfenberger 3; Sturm 0 Salzburg 3; Austria 0 Mattersburg 1; Wacker 0 Rapid 3.
Apr 17: Wiener Neustadt 0 Ried 2.
Apr 23: Kapfenberger 0 Sturm 5; Mattersburg 1 LASK 1; Salzburg 2 Wacker 3; Rapid 4 Wiener Neustadt 1.
Apr 24: Ried 1 Austria 1.

AUSTRIA

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sturm | 30 | 15 | 7 | 8 | 55 | 30 | 52 |
| Austria | 30 | 14 | 9 | 7 | 51 | 28 | 51 |
| Rapid | 30 | 13 | 9 | 8 | 47 | 33 | 48 |
| Ried | 30 | 14 | 6 | 10 | 43 | 33 | 48 |
| Salzburg | 30 | 12 | 11 | 7 | 36 | 24 | 47 |
| Wacker | 30 | 12 | 9 | 9 | 38 | 35 | 45 |
| W Neustadt | 30 | 12 | 6 | 12 | 37 | 43 | 42 |
| Kapfenberger | 30 | 8 | 9 | 13 | 36 | 51 | 33 |
| Mattersburg | 30 | 6 | 8 | 16 | 25 | 47 | 26 |
| LASK | 30 | 3 | 8 | 19 | 20 | 64 | 17 |

36-round season (9x4); bottom team will be relegated

### BELGIUM

Championship group

Apr 2: Gent 1 Club Brugge 1.
Apr 3: Anderlecht 1 Standard 3; Genk 2 Lokeren 1.
Apr 9: Lokeren 1 Gent 1.
Apr 10: Club Brugge 3 Anderlecht 0; Standard 2 Genk 1.
Apr 15: Anderlecht 2 Genk 0.
Apr 16: Gent 1 Standard 3.
Apr 17: Club Brugge 0 Lokeren 0.
Apr 20: Genk 3 Club Brugge 1; Gent 1 Anderlecht 1.
Apr 21: Standard 3 Lokeren 0.
Apr 23: Genk 3 Gent 0.
Apr 24: Lokeren 1 Anderlecht 2.
Apr 25: Club Brugge 1 Standard 1.

BELGIUM – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Genk | 5 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 9 | 6 | 41 |
| Anderlecht | 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 8 | 40 |
| Standard | 5 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 12 | 4 | 38 |
| Club Brugge | 5 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 33 |
| Gent | 5 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 9 | 32 |
| Lokeren | 5 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 8 | 27 |

10-round stage; winners will be champions
*Teams carried forward half the points (rounded up) gained in regular season*

### BULGARIA

Apr 1: CSKA 2 Sliven 0; Chernomorets 1 Cherno More 2.
Apr 2: Lokomotiv Plovdiv 1 Slavia 1; Akademik 0 Lovech 3; Pirin 3 Montana 0; Minyor 1 Kaliakra 0; Levski 2 Vidima-Rakovski 0.
Apr 3: Beroe 1 Lokomotiv Sofia 0.
Apr 9: Cherno More 5 Vidima-Rakovski 0; Kaliakra 2 Beroe 2.
Apr 10: Minyor 0 Levski 0; Montana 1 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 1; Lovech 0 CSKA 0.
Apr 11: Slavia 2 Akademik 0; Sliven 0 Chernomorets 0; Lokomotiv Sofia 2 Pirin 0.
Apr 16: Beroe 2 Minyor 0; Vidima-Rakovski 2 Sliven 1; Chernomorets 0 Lovech 1; Akademik 1 Montana 0; Pirin 1 Kaliakra 0; CSKA 1 Slavia 0.
Apr 17: Levski 1 Cherno More 0; Lokomotiv Plovdiv 0 Lokomotiv Sofia 0.
Apr 23: Lokomotiv Sofia 2 Akademik 0.
Apr 24: Beroe 2 Levski 3; Lovech 4 Vidima-Rakovski 0.
Apr 25: Montana 1 CSKA 4; Minyor 1 Pirin 0; Slavia 0 Chernomorets 1; Sliven 1 Cherno More 3; Kaliakra 1 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 3.

BULGARIA

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lovech | 23 | 18 | 5 | 0 | 43 | 9 | 59 |
| Levski | 23 | 16 | 3 | 4 | 45 | 20 | 51 |
| CSKA | 23 | 13 | 6 | 4 | 37 | 18 | 45 |
| Lok Sofia | 23 | 13 | 2 | 8 | 38 | 24 | 41 |
| Lok Plovdiv | 23 | 10 | 9 | 4 | 39 | 19 | 39 |
| Cherno More | 23 | 12 | 3 | 8 | 30 | 25 | 39 |
| Beroe | 23 | 10 | 6 | 7 | 26 | 27 | 36 |
| Chernomorets | 23 | 8 | 9 | 6 | 15 | 19 | 33 |
| Slavia | 23 | 9 | 4 | 10 | 32 | 28 | 31 |
| Minyor | 23 | 8 | 4 | 11 | 26 | 36 | 28 |
| Montana | 23 | 6 | 5 | 12 | 24 | 36 | 23 |
| Akademik | 23 | 5 | 5 | 13 | 13 | 32 | 20 |
| Pirin | 23 | 4 | 6 | 13 | 16 | 29 | 18 |
| Sliven | 23 | 4 | 5 | 14 | 18 | 33 | 17 |
| Kaliakra | 23 | 4 | 5 | 14 | 14 | 34 | 17 |
| V-Rakovski | 23 | 4 | 3 | 16 | 17 | 44 | 15 |

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated; 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

### CROATIA

Apr 1: Lokomotiva 0 Split 0.
Apr 2: Istra 1 Zadar 0; Osijek 1 Inter 0; Sibenik 2 Hrvatski Dragovoljac 2; Slaven 4 Karlovac 0; Cibalia 2 Varazdin 0; Hajduk 1 Rijeka 1; Zagreb 0 Dinamo 1.
Apr 8: Inter 3 Sibenik 2.
Apr 9: Hrvatski Dragovoljac 0 Slaven 0; Karlovac 0 Cibalia 0; Rijeka 1 Zagreb 1; Dinamo 1 Lokomotiva 0; Split 2 Istra 0; Zadar 1 Osijek 1; Varazdin 3 Hajduk 0.
Apr 15: Lokomotiva 0 Rijeka 0; Inter 3 Hrvatski Dragovoljac 2; Zagreb 2 Varazdin 2.
Apr 16: Sibenik 2 Zadar 0; Osijek 1 Split 0; Hajduk 2 Karlovac 3; Cibalia 1 Slaven 2; Istra 2 Dinamo 1.

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CYPRUS

## New champs crowned

APOEL beat holders Omonia 2-0 to win their 21st championship with four games left to go in the end-of-season play-offs.

International midfielder Constantinos Charalambidis, who scored both goals, said: "We deserved this title. I don't believe anyone could say otherwise. APOEL showed this season that our strength is our unity and the fact that we all play for each other. It is not about one single player."

APOEL enter the next Champions League in the second qualifying round.

DENMARK

## Solbakken out in style

Copenhagen secured their third successive Superliga after coming from behind to beat Lyngby 2-1.

Peter Madsen had put the home side in front, but goals from Cristian Bolanos and Dame Ndoye - coupled with OB's 2-1 defeat at home to Nordsjaelland - meant Staale Solbakken's side wrapped up the title with seven games to spare.

The Norwegian coach, who is leaving the club at the end of the season, said: "We lacked a bit of focus in the first 15 minutes, but after that we took control. Now we have a duty to the other teams in the league to keep our focus in our last seven matches."

At the other end of the table, Randers coach Ove Christensen was dismissed after he punched a reporter following his struggling side's 4-0 home defeat against Brondby.

League Cup success...Marseille

Apr 23: Hrvatski Dragovoljac 0 Cibalia 0; Karlovac 2 Zagreb 1; Varazdin 0 Lokomotiva 1; Rijeka 2 Istra 0; Dinamo 1 Osijek 0; Split 1 Sibenik 0; Zadar 1 Inter 0; Slaven 1 Hajduk 2.

**CROATIA**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dinamo (C) | 26 | 20 | 4 | 2 | 48 | 11 | 64 |
| Hajduk | 26 | 15 | 6 | 5 | 49 | 26 | 51 |
| Split | 26 | 13 | 4 | 9 | 31 | 19 | 43 |
| Inter | 26 | 12 | 5 | 9 | 30 | 28 | 41 |
| Cibalia | 26 | 10 | 7 | 9 | 28 | 19 | 37 |
| Karlovac | 26 | 11 | 4 | 11 | 23 | 25 | 37 |
| Rijeka | 26 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 27 | 31 | 36 |
| Osijek | 26 | 8 | 10 | 8 | 26 | 25 | 34 |
| Slaven | 26 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 27 | 25 | 33 |
| Varazdin | 26 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 27 | 31 | 33 |
| Zadar | 26 | 9 | 4 | 13 | 26 | 31 | 31 |
| Sibenik | 26 | 7 | 9 | 10 | 34 | 34 | 30 |
| Zagreb | 26 | 8 | 6 | 12 | 24 | 30 | 30 |
| Lokomotiva | 26 | 7 | 7 | 12 | 20 | 33 | 28 |
| Istra | 26 | 7 | 3 | 16 | 20 | 42 | 24 |
| H Dragovoljac | 26 | 4 | 8 | 14 | 20 | 50 | 20 |

30-round season (15x2); bottom 5 will be relegated

## CYPRUS

**Championship group**

Apr 3: AEK 0 APOEL 1; Omonia 1 Anorthosis 0.
Apr 10: APOEL 2 Omonia 0; Anorthosis 2 AEK 0.
Apr 16: Omonia 3 AEK 0.
Apr 17: Anorthosis 1 APOEL 2.

**CYPRUS – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| APOEL (C) | 29 | 23 | 2 | 4 | 60 | 20 | 71 |
| Omonia | 29 | 16 | 8 | 5 | 42 | 18 | 56 |
| Anorthosis | 29 | 14 | 6 | 9 | 49 | 34 | 48 |
| AEK | 29 | 12 | 6 | 11 | 36 | 36 | 42 |

6-round stage; winners will be champions

*Teams carried forward full record from 26-round regular season*

## CZECH REPUBLIC

Apr 1: Mlada Boleslav 2 Olomouc 0.
Apr 2: Pribram 0 Bohemians 1905 1; Ostrava 0 Liberec 0; Jablonec 2 Sparta 1.
Apr 3: Brno 0 Teplice 1; Usti nad Labem 0 Plzen 5; Ceske Budejovice 0 Slovacko 0; Slavia 0 Hradec Kralove 0.
Apr 8: Plzen 1 Jablonec 1.
Apr 9: Liberec 3 Olomouc 0; Slovacko 2 Pribram 0; Teplice 1 Mlada Boleslav 2.
Apr 10: Ceske Budejovice 2 Usti nad Labem 0; Hradec Kralove 2 Ostrava 1; Bohemians 1905 2 Brno 1.
Apr 11: Sparta 2 Slavia 0.
Apr 15: Pribram 0 Plzen 3.
Apr 16: Ostrava 0 Bohemians 1905 0.
Apr 17: Usti nad Labem 0 Hradec Kralove 2; Jablonec 5 Ceske Budejovice 0; Olomouc 3 Teplice 0; Brno 0 Liberec 1; Mlada Boleslav 1 Sparta 2.
Apr 18: Slavia 2 Slovacko 0.
Apr 22: Sparta 2 Olomouc 0.
Apr 23: Slovacko 0 Ostrava 0.
Apr 24: Usti nad Labem 2 Jablonec 1; Ceske Budejovice 3 Pribram 0; Hradec Kralove 1 Brno 0; Bohemians 1905 3 Mlada Boleslav 1; Liberec 6 Teplice 2.
Apr 25: Plzen 2 Slavia 2.

**CZECH REPUBLIC**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Plzen | 25 | 18 | 5 | 2 | 61 | 23 | 59 |
| Sparta | 25 | 18 | 1 | 6 | 41 | 15 | 55 |
| Jablonec | 25 | 14 | 5 | 6 | 52 | 24 | 47 |
| Olomouc | 25 | 12 | 5 | 8 | 42 | 23 | 41 |
| M Boleslav | 25 | 11 | 7 | 7 | 42 | 32 | 40 |
| Boh'ians 1905 | 25 | 11 | 6 | 8 | 30 | 25 | 39 |
| Liberec | 25 | 10 | 6 | 9 | 38 | 29 | 36 |
| Teplice | 25 | 10 | 5 | 10 | 35 | 41 | 35 |
| H Kralove | 25 | 9 | 7 | 9 | 22 | 30 | 34 |
| Slavia | 25 | 6 | 11 | 8 | 29 | 31 | 29 |
| Slovacko | 25 | 7 | 6 | 12 | 23 | 37 | 27 |
| C Budejovice | 25 | 6 | 9 | 10 | 22 | 40 | 27 |
| Ostrava | 25 | 6 | 7 | 12 | 21 | 33 | 25 |
| Pribram | 25 | 5 | 7 | 13 | 13 | 31 | 22 |
| Brno | 25 | 6 | 1 | 18 | 26 | 48 | 19 |
| Usti | 25 | 4 | 6 | 15 | 18 | 53 | 18 |

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

## DENMARK

Apr 2: Esbjerg 1 Copenhagen 1; AaB 0 OB 1.
Apr 3: Randers 0 SonderjyskE 0; Horsens 0 Nordsjaelland 0; Brondby 2 Silkeborg 2.
Apr 4: Midtjylland 4 Lyngby 4.
Apr 9: Copenhagen 3 Randers 1; Silkeborg 1 Midtjylland 0.
Apr 10: AaB 0 Horsens 0; SonderjyskE 0 Nordsjaelland 2; OB 1 Brondby 1.
Apr 11: Lyngby 1 Esbjerg 2.
Apr 14: Lyngby 1 Midtjylland 0.
Apr 16: Esbjerg 1 Silkeborg 1.
Apr 17: Horsens 1 SonderjyskE 1; Randers 1 Lyngby 1; Nordsjaelland 1 Copenhagen 3; Brondby 1 AaB 2.
Apr 18: Midtjylland 1 OB 1.
Apr 20: Silkeborg 1 SonderjyskE 0; AaB 4 Randers 1.
Apr 21: OB 1 Nordsjaelland 2; Midtjylland 1 Horsens 0; Lyngby 1 Copenhagen 2; Brondby 3 Esbjerg 0.
Apr 24: Esbjerg 0 Midtjylland 1; Nordsjaelland 3 AaB 3.
Apr 25: SonderjyskE 0 OB 2; Copenhagen 2 Silkeborg 0; Horsens 2 Lyngby 0; Randers 0 Brondby 4.

**DENMARK**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Copenhagen (C) | 27 | 22 | 4 | 1 | 65 | 22 | 70 |
| OB | 27 | 13 | 5 | 9 | 46 | 35 | 44 |
| Brondby | 27 | 11 | 9 | 7 | 46 | 35 | 42 |
| Midtjylland | 27 | 11 | 8 | 8 | 43 | 32 | 41 |
| Silkeborg | 27 | 8 | 11 | 8 | 33 | 39 | 35 |
| Horsens | 27 | 9 | 7 | 11 | 23 | 31 | 34 |
| Nordsjaelland | 27 | 8 | 7 | 12 | 32 | 43 | 31 |
| SonderjyskE | 27 | 8 | 6 | 13 | 26 | 37 | 30 |
| Lyngby | 27 | 7 | 8 | 12 | 36 | 47 | 29 |
| Randers | 27 | 5 | 13 | 9 | 32 | 38 | 28 |
| AaB | 27 | 6 | 10 | 11 | 30 | 39 | 28 |
| Esbjerg | 27 | 5 | 10 | 12 | 29 | 43 | 25 |

33-round season (11x3); bottom 2 will be relegated

## ENGLAND

**Saturday, April 2**

**Arsenal 0**
**Blackburn 0** Att: 60,087

**Birmingham 2** (Phillips 4, Gardner 59)
**Bolton 1** (Elmander 69) Att: 26,142

**Everton 2** (Osman 38, Baines pen 83)
**Aston Villa 2** (Bent 47, 68) Att: 37,619

**Newcastle 4** (Nolan 21, Ameobi 45, Lovenkrands 50, Gutierrez 90+1)
**Wolverhampton 1** (Ebanks-Blake 58) Att: 49,939

**Stoke 1** (Walters 8)
**Chelsea 1** (Drogba 33) Att: 27,508

**West Bromwich 2** (Brunt pen 61, pen 88)
**Liverpool 1** (Skrtel 49) Att: 26,196

**West Ham 2** (Noble pen 10, pen 25)
**Manchester United 4** (Rooney 65, 72, pen 78, Hernandez 83) Att: 34,546

**Wigan 0**
**Tottenham 0** Att: 18,578

**Sunday, April 3**

**Fulham 3** (Zamora 22, 27, Etuhu 71)
**Blackpool 0** Att: 25,692

**Manchester City 5** (A Johnson 8, Tevez pen 14, Silva 63, Vieira 67, Y Toure 73)
**Sunderland 0** Att: 44,197

**Saturday, April 9**

**Blackburn 1** (Hoilett 45)
**Birmingham 1** (Bowyer 31) Att: 28,426

**Bolton 3** (Sturridge 13, 50, Lee 19)
**West Ham 0** Att: 25,857

**Chelsea 1** (Malouda 67)
**Wigan 0** Att: 40,734

**Manchester United 2** (Berbatov 12, Valencia 32)
**Fulham 0** Att: 75,339

**Sunderland 2** (Shorey og 9, Bardsley 31)
**West Bromwich 3** (Odemwingie 29, Mulumbu 53, Scharner 71) Att: 41,586

**Tottenham 3** (Crouch 11, 33, Modric 18)
**Stoke 2** (Etherington 26, Jones 41) Att: 32,702

**Wolverhampton 0**
**Everton 3** (Beckford 20, Neville 39, Bilyaletdinov 44) Att: 28,352

**Sunday, April 10**

**Aston Villa 1** (Collins 24)
**Newcastle 0** Att: 37,090

**Blackpool 1** (Taylor-Fletcher 52)
**Arsenal 3** (Diaby 17, Eboue 20, Van Persie 76) Att: 16,030

**Monday, April 11**

**Liverpool 3** (Carroll 13, 35, Kuyt 34)
**Manchester City 0** Att: 44,776

**Saturday, April 16**

**Birmingham 2** (Larsson 41, Gardner 65)
**Sunderland 0** Att: 28,108

**Blackpool 1** (Campbell 82)
**Wigan 3** (Rodallega 2, N'Zogbia 45, Eardley og 66) Att: 16,030

**Everton 2** (Osman 53, Baines pen 75)
**Blackburn 0** Att: 35,857

**West Bromwich 1** (Odemwingie 16)
**Chelsea 3** (Drogba 22, Kalou 26, Lampard 45) Att: 25,163

**West Ham 1** (Keane 1)
**Aston Villa 2** (Bent 36, Agbonlahor 90+1)

**Sunday, April 17**

**Arsenal 1** (Van Persie pen 90+7)
**Liverpool 1** (Kuyt pen 90+8) Att: 60,029

**Tuesday, April 19**

**Newcastle 0**
**Manchester United 0** Att: 49,025

**Wednesday, April 20**

**Chelsea 3** (Malouda 2, 61, Kalou 25)
**Birmingham 1** (Larsson pen 76) Att: 40,848

**Tottenham 3** (Van der Vaart 7, pen 69, Huddlestone 44)
**Arsenal 3** (Walcott 5, Nasri 11, Van Persie 39) Att: 36,138

**Saturday, April 23**

**Aston Villa 1** (Bent 42)
**Stoke 1** (Jones 20) Att: 35,235

**Blackpool 1** (Campbell 32)
**Newcastle 1** (Lovenkrands 17) Att: 16,003

**Chelsea 3** (Lampard 44, F Torres 84, Malouda 90)
**West Ham 0** Att: 41,656

**Liverpool 5** (Rodriguez 7, 65, 72, Kuyt 22, Cole 86)
**Birmingham 0** Att: 44,734

**Manchester United 1** (Hernandez 84)
**Everton 0** Att: 75,300

**Sunderland 4** (Gyan 55, Henderson 65, 76, Sessegnon pen 73)
**Wigan 2** (Diame 52, Di Santo 90) Att: 39,650

**Tottenham 2** (Pavlyuchenko 27, Defoe 65)
**West Bromwich 2** (Odemwingie 4, Cox 80) Att: 36,160

**Wolverhampton 1** (Fletcher 22)
**Fulham 1** (Johnson 79) Att: 28,825

**Sunday, April 24**

**Bolton 2** (Sturridge 38, Cohen 90)
**Arsenal 1** (Van Persie 47) Att: 26,881

**Monday, April 25**

**Blackburn 0**
**Manchester City 1** (Dzeko 75) Att: 23,529

**ENGLAND**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Man United | 34 | 21 | 10 | 3 | 71 | 32 | 73 |
| Chelsea | 34 | 20 | 7 | 7 | 64 | 27 | 67 |
| Arsenal | 34 | 18 | 10 | 6 | 67 | 36 | 64 |
| Man City | 33 | 17 | 8 | 8 | 51 | 30 | 59 |
| Tottenham | 33 | 14 | 13 | 6 | 49 | 41 | 55 |
| Liverpool | 34 | 15 | 7 | 12 | 51 | 39 | 52 |
| Everton | 34 | 11 | 14 | 9 | 47 | 42 | 47 |
| Bolton | 33 | 12 | 10 | 11 | 48 | 44 | 46 |
| Newcastle | 34 | 10 | 11 | 13 | 49 | 48 | 41 |
| Sunderland | 34 | 10 | 11 | 13 | 39 | 49 | 41 |
| Aston Villa | 34 | 10 | 11 | 13 | 43 | 55 | 41 |
| West Brom | 34 | 10 | 10 | 14 | 49 | 64 | 40 |
| Fulham | 33 | 8 | 15 | 10 | 37 | 36 | 39 |
| Stoke | 33 | 11 | 6 | 16 | 40 | 43 | 39 |
| Birmingham | 34 | 8 | 14 | 12 | 34 | 51 | 38 |
| Blackburn | 34 | 9 | 8 | 17 | 40 | 55 | 35 |
| Blackpool | 34 | 9 | 7 | 18 | 48 | 70 | 34 |
| Wigan | 34 | 7 | 13 | 14 | 34 | 57 | 34 |
| Wolves | 33 | 9 | 6 | 18 | 37 | 57 | 33 |
| West Ham | 34 | 7 | 11 | 16 | 39 | 61 | 32 |

38-round season (19x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

**LEADING GOALSCORERS**

21 Dimitar Berbatov (Manchester United)
19 Carlos Tevez (Manchester City)
15 Darren Bent (Sunderland/Aston Villa)
15 Robin Van Persie (Arsenal)

FRANCE

### Holders keep Cup

Marseille became the first club to retain the French League Cup when a late goal from Taye Taiwo gave them a 1-0 win over Montpellier.

Victory established Souleymane Diawara and Didier Deschamps, with four and three wins respectively, as the most successful player and coach in the tournament's history.

Lille are through to their first Final since 1955 after beating Nice 2-0 in the French Cup semi-finals.

GERMANY

### Hertha bounce back

Hertha Berlin, who are coached by former Germany international Markus Babbel, returned to the top flight at the first time of asking when a 1-0 win over Duisburg guaranteed promotion.

Adrian Ramos scored the only goal of the game for Hertha, who came within one win of earning themselves a place in the Champions League two years ago but finished bottom of the Bundesliga last season.

Promoted...Hertha celebrate

**903 minutes it took Fernando Torres to score his first goal for Chelsea following his £50million move from Liverpool**

## FA CUP

**Semi-finals**

Apr 16: Manchester City 1 Manchester United 0.
Apr 17: Bolton 0 Stoke 5.

## FRANCE

**Saturday, April 2**

**Arles-Avignon 0**
**Monaco 2** (Moukandjo 29, Park 66) Att: 9,203

**Lille 3** (Chedjou 30, Hazard 61, Sow 73)
**Caen 1** (El Arabi 85) Att: 16,898

**Nancy 0**
**Bordeaux 0** Att: 19,022

**Paris Saint-Germain 0**
**Lorient 0** Att: 27,226

**Rennes 0**
**Auxerre 0** Att: 27,743

**Sochaux 2** (Boudebouz pen 6, Brown 90+1)
**Brest 1** (Grougi pen 62) Att: 10,982

**Toulouse 0**
**Montpellier 1** (Camara 75) Att: 12,123

**Sunday, April 3**

**Lens 0**
**Marseille 1** (Cheyrou 69) Att: 40,852

**Nice 2** (Mouloungui pen 90+1, Civelli 90+3)
**Lyon 2** (Kallstrom 21, Lopez 45) Att: 8,856

**Saint-Etienne 1** (Payet 57)
**Valenciennes 1** (Pujol 48) Att: 24,702

**Saturday, April 9**

**Auxerre 2** (Oliech 42, Dudka pen 80)
**Saint-Etienne 2** (Riviere 26, Aubameyang 70) Att: 17,298

**Bordeaux 0**
**Arles-Avignon 0** Att: 24,128

**Brest 2** (Roux 29, Grougi 56)
**Rennes 0** Att: 15,127

**Caen 1** (Hamouma 90+4)
**Paris Saint-Germain 2** (Jallet 12, Chantome 68) Att: 18,981

**Lorient 1** (Morel 35)
**Sochaux 1** (Drame 25) Att: 15,103

**Monaco 1** (Park 11)
**Lille 0** Att: 7,986

**Valenciennes 1** (Pujol 43)
**Nancy 1** (Vahirua 90+3) Att: 10,607

**Sunday, April 10**

**Lyon 3** (Bedimo og 56, Briand 61, Lopez 90+1)
**Lens 0** Att: 34,429

**Marseille 2** (Remy 31, Gignac 85)
**Toulouse 2** (Braaten 45+2, Cetto 61) Att: 50,698

**Montpellier 1** (Dernis 44)
**Nice 1** (Jourdren og 73) Att: 14,245

**Saturday, April 16**

**Lens 1** (Hermach 20)
**Brest 1** (Ayite 59) Att: 30,716

**Lille 1** (Sow 57)
**Bordeaux 1** (Savic 75) Att: 17,069

**Nice 3** (Mounier 20, Civelli 46, Mouloungui 59)
**Monaco 2** (Gosso 29, Park pen 74) Att: 8,988

**Rennes 1** (Dalmat 23)
**Lorient 2** (Gameiro 51, Coquelin 63) Att: 28,261

**Saint-Etienne 2** (Payet 56, 65)
**Nancy 1** (Andre Luiz 39) Att: 24,274

**Sochaux 3** (Drame 12, Maiga 80, 86)
**Caen 2** (El Arabi 9, Hamouma 88) Att: 11,338

**Toulouse 0**
**Auxerre 1** (Dudka 90+2) Att: 35,523

**Sunday, April 17**

**Arles-Avignon 0**
**Valenciennes 1** (Pujol 67) Att: 7,652

**Montpellier 1** (Giroud 64)
**Marseille 2** (Gignac 69, Taiwo pen 82) Att: 25,119

**Paris Saint-Germain 1** (Camara 75)
**Lyon 0** Att: 40,133

**Sunday, April 24**

**Auxerre 1** (Boly 6)
**Lens 1** (Roudet 48) Att: 12,980

**Bordeaux 2** (Plasil 14, Diabate 88)
**Saint-Etienne 0** Att: 29,657

**Brest 2** (Toure 36, Grougi 45+1)
**Paris Saint-Germain 2** (Bodmer 19, Kantari og 87) Att: 14,550

**Caen 1** (Hamouma 28)
**Toulouse 1** (Sissoko pen 38) Att: 15,763

**Lorient 1** (Gameiro 67)
**Lille 1** (Debuchy 42) Att: 16,335

**Monaco 1** (Welcome 73)
**Rennes 0** Att: 6,569

**Nancy 0**
**Arles-Avignon 0** Att: 18,873

**Valenciennes 1** (Kadir 9)
**Sochaux 1** (Ducourtioux og 11) Att: 12,229

**FRANCE**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lille | 32 | 16 | 12 | 4 | 54 | 31 | 60 |
| Marseille | 31 | 16 | 10 | 5 | 46 | 27 | 58 |
| Lyon | 31 | 14 | 11 | 6 | 52 | 29 | 53 |
| PSG | 32 | 14 | 11 | 7 | 47 | 33 | 53 |
| Rennes | 32 | 14 | 9 | 9 | 33 | 26 | 51 |
| Bordeaux | 32 | 10 | 14 | 8 | 40 | 35 | 44 |
| Lorient | 32 | 11 | 11 | 10 | 39 | 37 | 44 |
| Saint-Etienne | 32 | 11 | 11 | 10 | 40 | 39 | 44 |
| Sochaux | 32 | 12 | 7 | 13 | 47 | 40 | 43 |
| Montpellier | 31 | 11 | 10 | 10 | 27 | 33 | 43 |
| Brest | 32 | 10 | 10 | 12 | 34 | 37 | 40 |
| Valenciennes | 32 | 8 | 15 | 9 | 37 | 34 | 39 |
| Toulouse | 32 | 11 | 6 | 15 | 32 | 35 | 39 |
| Nice | 31 | 9 | 12 | 10 | 25 | 33 | 39 |
| Monaco | 32 | 8 | 14 | 10 | 32 | 32 | 38 |
| Auxerre | 32 | 7 | 17 | 8 | 36 | 37 | 38 |
| Nancy | 32 | 10 | 8 | 14 | 32 | 44 | 38 |
| Caen | 32 | 9 | 9 | 14 | 36 | 47 | 36 |
| Lens | 32 | 6 | 12 | 14 | 30 | 48 | 30 |
| Arles-Av (R) | 32 | 1 | 11 | 20 | 16 | 58 | 14 |

38-round season (19x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

**LEADING GOALSCORERS**

21 Moussa Sow (Lille)
18 Kevin Gameiro (Lorient)
16 Youssef El Arabi (Caen)

## FRENCH CUP

**Semi-finals**

Apr 19: Nice 0 Lille 2.
Apr 20: Angers 1 Paris Saint-Germain 3.

## GERMANY

**Friday, April 1**

**St Pauli 0**
**Schalke 2** (Raul 26, Draxler 65) Att: 24,487
*Match abandoned in 87th minute after a linesman was hit by a plastic cup, full of beer, thrown from a home fan section; result stood*

**Saturday, April 2**

**Bayern Munich 1** (Robben 76)
**Monchengladbach 0** Att: 69,000

**Borussia Dortmund 4** (Gotze 59, Barrios 64, 72, Grosskreutz 83)
**Hannover 1** (Abdellaoue 57) Att: 80,720

**1899 Hoffenheim 0**
**Hamburg 0** Att: 30,150

**Kaiserslautern 0**
**Bayer Leverkusen 1** (Sam 73) Att: 46,050

**Mainz 1** (Allagui 74)
**Freiburg 1** (Cisse 1) Att: 20,000

**Werder Bremen 1** (Frings 34)
**Stuttgart 1** (Hajnal 13) Att: 40,500

**Sunday, April 3**

**Koln 1** (Novakovic 90+2)
**Nurnberg 0** Att: 49,000

**Wolfsburg 1** (Mandzukic 85)
**Eintracht Frankfurt 1** (Meier 59) Att: 29,125

**Friday, April 8**

**Eintracht Frankfurt 1** (Fenin 83)
**Werder Bremen 1** (Altintop og 58) Att: 51,500

**Saturday, April 9**

**Freiburg 3** (Schuster 24, Cisse pen 60, Butscher 78)
**1899 Hoffenheim 2** (Ibisevic pen 34, Babel 42) Att: 24,000

**Hamburg 1** (Van Nistelrooy pen 39)
**Borussia Dortmund 1** (Blaszczykowski 90+2) Att: 57,000

**Hannover 2** (Ya Konan pen 45+1, Pinto 59)
**Mainz 0** Att: 48,000

**Nurnberg 1** (Eigler 60)
**Bayern Munich 1** (Muller 4) Att: 48,548

**Schalke 1** (Jurado 76)
**Wolfsburg 0** Att: 61,673

**Stuttgart 2** (Kuzmanovic pen 26, Pogrebnyak 39)
**Kaiserslautern 4** (Lakic 17, 79, Hoffer 68, Rivic 86) Att: 39,000

**Sunday, April 10**

**Bayer Leverkusen 2** (Kiessling 66, Bender 77)
**St Pauli 1** (Takyi 58) Att: 30,210

**UP TO AND INCLUDING APRIL 25 GAMES**

| POS | | TEAM | GOALS | FACTOR | PTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Lionel Messi | Barcelona (Spa) | 31 | 2 | 62 |
| 2 | Cristiano Ronaldo | Real Madrid (Spa) | 29 | 2 | 58 |
| 3 | Edinson Cavani | Napoli (Ita) | 26 | 2 | 52 |
| | Antonio Di Natale | Udinese (Ita) | 26 | 2 | 52 |
| 5 | Mario Gomez | Bayern Munich (Ger) | 23 | 2 | 46 |
| 6 | Dimitar Berbatov | Manchester United (Eng) | 21 | 2 | 42 |
| | Moussa Sow | Lille (Fra) | 21 | 2 | 42 |
| 8 | Papiss Demba Cisse | Freiburg (Ger) | 20 | 2 | 40 |
| | Samuel Eto'o | Internazionale (Ita) | 20 | 2 | 40 |
| 10 | Kenny Miller | Rangers (Sco)/Bursaspor (Tur) | 26 | 1.5 | 39 |
| 11 | Marco Di Vaio | Bologna (Ita) | 19 | 2 | 38 |
| | Carlos Tevez | Manchester City (Eng) | 19 | 2 | 38 |
| 13 | Kevin Gameiro | Lorient (Fra) | 18 | 2 | 36 |
| | Alessandro Matri | Cagliari (Ita)/Juventus (Ita) | 18 | 2 | 36 |
| | David Villa | Barcelona (Spa) | 18 | 2 | 36 |

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Title blow...PSV lost to Twente

HOLLAND

## Top two to meet twice

With two games to go in the Eredivisie, Twente hold a one-point lead over Ajax, with the two teams due to meet in a potential title decider on the final day of the season in Amsterdam.

The week prior to that they will contest the Dutch Cup Final.

PSV's title chances were dealt a huge blow when they lost 2-0 at Twente and they have slipped to third place in the Eredivise. They will now rely on Twente and Ajax both losing at least once if they are to snatch the title on goal difference.

HUNGARY

## Paks gain revenge

Two goals from Jozsef Magasfoldi and one from Laszlo Bartha saw Paks overturn a 2-1 first-leg deficit to beat Debrecen 4-2 on aggregate in the Hungarian League Cup Final. It was sweet revenge for Paks, who had lost to Debrecen in last year's Final.

LATVIA

## Nice start for Pahars

A Vladimirs Kolesnicenko penalty got Marians Pahars'

First win...Skonto coach Pahars



**Monchengladbach 5** (Arango 29, Reus 34, 39, Daems pen 65, Nordtveit 67)
**Koln 1** (Novakovic 50) Att: 53,104

Friday, April 15
**Mainz 1** (Schurrle 87)
**Monchengladbach 0** Att: 20,300

Saturday, April 16
**Hamburg 0**
**Hannover 0** Att: 57,000

**1899 Hoffenheim 1** (Roberto Firmino 78)
**Eintracht Frankfurt 0** Att: 30,150

**Kaiserslautern 0**
**Nurnberg 2** (Eigler 33, Mak 90+2) Att: 49,780

**Koln 1** (Novakovic 67)
**Stuttgart 3** (Trasch 50, Harnik 52, Kuzmanovic pen 63) Att: 50,000

**Werder Bremen 1** (Wagner 59)
**Schalke 1** (Edu 62) Att: 40,500

**Wolfsburg 2** (Mandzukic 38, Polak 89)
**St Pauli 2** (Naki 61, Lehmann 77) Att: 30,000

Sunday, April 17
**Bayern Munich 5** (Rolfes og 6, Gomez 27, 43, 45+1, Ribery 75)
**Bayer Leverkusen 1** (Derdiyok 61) Att: 69,000

**Borussia Dortmund 3** (Gotze 22, Lewandowski 42, Grosskreutz 77)
**Freiburg 0** Att: 80,720

Thursday, April 21
**Freiburg 1** (Rosenthal 78)
**Hannover 3** (Abdellaoue 23, Schlaudraff 30, Rausch 58) Att: 24,000

Saturday, April 23
**Bayer Leverkusen 2** (Kadlec 39, Vidal 50)
**1899 Hoffenheim 1** (Sigurdsson 28) Att: 29,313

**Eintracht Frankfurt 1** (Rode 53)
**Bayern Munich 1** (Gomez pen 88) Att: 51,500

**Monchengladbach 1** (Idrissou 34)
**Borussia Dortmund 0** Att: 54,057

**Schalke 0**
**Kaiserslautern 1** (Lakic 41) Att: 61,673

**St Pauli 1** (Bartels 29)
**Werder Bremen 3** (Thorandt og 49, Pizarro 73, 74) Att: 24,487

**Stuttgart 3** (Cacau 6, 87, Gentner 77)
**Hamburg 0** Att: 39,000

Sunday, April 24
**Nurnberg 0**
**Mainz 0** Att: 48,548

**Wolfsburg 4** (Mandzukic 13, 39, Dejagah 57, 87)
**Koln 1** (Freis 39) Att: 30,000

GERMANY

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| B Dortmund | 31 | 21 | 6 | 4 | 62 | 19 | 69 |
| B Leverkusen | 31 | 19 | 7 | 5 | 62 | 41 | 64 |
| Hannover | 31 | 18 | 3 | 10 | 45 | 41 | 57 |
| Bayern | 31 | 16 | 8 | 7 | 67 | 37 | 56 |
| Mainz | 31 | 15 | 4 | 12 | 44 | 37 | 49 |
| Nurnberg | 31 | 13 | 8 | 10 | 45 | 38 | 47 |
| Hamburg | 31 | 12 | 7 | 12 | 44 | 48 | 43 |
| Freiburg | 31 | 12 | 5 | 14 | 39 | 47 | 41 |
| Hoffenheim | 31 | 10 | 10 | 11 | 46 | 44 | 40 |
| Schalke | 31 | 11 | 7 | 13 | 35 | 35 | 40 |
| Werder | 31 | 9 | 11 | 11 | 43 | 57 | 38 |
| Kaiserslautern | 31 | 10 | 7 | 14 | 41 | 48 | 37 |
| Stuttgart | 31 | 10 | 6 | 15 | 55 | 55 | 36 |
| Koln | 31 | 10 | 5 | 16 | 41 | 61 | 35 |
| E Frankfurt | 31 | 9 | 7 | 15 | 30 | 41 | 34 |
| Wolfsburg | 31 | 7 | 11 | 13 | 38 | 45 | 32 |
| M'gladbach | 31 | 8 | 5 | 18 | 44 | 64 | 29 |
| St Pauli | 31 | 8 | 5 | 18 | 33 | 56 | 29 |

34-round season (17x2); bottom 2 will be relegated; 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

**LEADING GOALSCORERS**
23 Mario Gomez (Bayern Munich)
20 Papiss Demba Cisse (Freiburg)
16 Theofanis Gekas (Eintracht Frankfurt)

## GREECE

Apr 3: Volos 3 Xanthi 0; Olympiakos 3 Kavala 1; Asteras 1 Aris 2; AEK 1 Atromitos 0; Panserraikos 1 Panathinaikos 0; PAOK 1 Larissa 0; Ergotelis 1 Iraklis 0; Kerkyra 1 Panionios 2.
Apr 10: Kavala 1 Xanthi 1; Atromitos 3 Olympiakos 1; Aris 2 Volos 1; Larissa 2 AEK 3; Panathinaikos 1 Asteras 0; Iraklis 0 PAOK 0; Panionios 0 Panserraikos 0; Kerkyra 1 Ergotelis 0.
Apr 17: Atromitos 0 Kavala 0; Xanthi 1 Aris 2; Olympiakos 6 Larissa 0; Volos 3 Panathinaikos 2; AEK 0 Iraklis 0; Asteras 3 Panionios 1; PAOK 2 Kerkyra 0; Panserraikos 0 Ergotelis 4.

GREECE – FINAL*

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Olympiakos (C) | 30 | 24 | 1 | 5 | 65 | 18 | 73 |
| Panathinaikos | 30 | 18 | 6 | 6 | 47 | 26 | 60 |
| AEK | 30 | 15 | 5 | 10 | 46 | 37 | 50 |
| PAOK | 30 | 14 | 6 | 10 | 32 | 29 | 48 |
| Volos | 30 | 12 | 11 | 7 | 40 | 28 | 47 |
| Aris | 30 | 13 | 6 | 11 | 29 | 29 | 45 |
| Kavala | 30 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 29 | 27 | 40 |
| Ergotelis | 30 | 11 | 6 | 13 | 32 | 38 | 39 |
| Xanthi | 30 | 9 | 9 | 12 | 29 | 35 | 36 |
| Panionios | 30 | 8 | 11 | 11 | 25 | 35 | 35 |
| Iraklis | 30 | 7 | 14 | 9 | 22 | 28 | 35 |
| Atromitos | 30 | 7 | 13 | 10 | 30 | 34 | 34 |
| Kerkyra | 30 | 9 | 6 | 15 | 30 | 40 | 33 |
| Asteras (R) | 30 | 7 | 10 | 13 | 21 | 29 | 31 |
| Larissa (R) | 30 | 5 | 10 | 15 | 29 | 47 | 25 |
| Panserraikos (R) | 30 | 6 | 6 | 18 | 22 | 48 | 24 |

*Teams finishing 2nd to 5th entered play-offs for Greece's 2nd Champions League place

## HOLLAND

Apr 2: Twente 2 PSV 0; Willem II 4 Roda JC 5; Heerenveen 2 Excelsior 3; De Graafschap 1 NAC 3; Feyenoord 0 AZ 1.
Apr 3: Vitesse 2 NEC 1; Utrecht 2 Den Haag 3; Ajax 3 Heracles 0; Groningen 3 VVV 2.
Apr 8: AZ 1 NAC 1.
Apr 9: VVV 1 NEC 4; Den Haag 1 Vitesse 0; Excelsior 0 De Graafschap 0; Willem II 2 Heracles 6.
Apr 10: Twente 1 Roda JC 1; Ajax 2 Groningen 0; Utrecht 0 Feyenoord 4; PSV 2 Heerenveen 2.
Apr 16: Heerenveen 3 Utrecht 0.
Apr 16: Vitesse 2 Groningen 1; Roda JC 5 VVV 2; NAC 1 Excelsior 2; AZ 3 Den Haag 1.
Apr 17: Heracles 0 PSV 2; De Graafschap 1 Twente 1; NEC 1 Ajax 2; Feyenoord 6 Willem II 1.
Apr 22: Den Haag 1 Twente 2.
Apr 23: Willem II 2 AZ 1; Heracles 2 De Graafschap 0; Roda JC 5 NAC 1; VVV 2 Heerenveen 2.
Apr 24: Ajax 4 Excelsior 1; Utrecht 4 Vitesse 2; Feyenoord 3 PSV 1; Groningen 3 NEC 1.

HOLLAND

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Twente | 32 | 20 | 8 | 4 | 60 | 31 | 68 |
| Ajax | 32 | 20 | 7 | 5 | 67 | 28 | 67 |
| PSV | 32 | 19 | 8 | 5 | 77 | 33 | 65 |
| AZ | 32 | 16 | 8 | 8 | 49 | 38 | 56 |
| Roda JC | 32 | 14 | 12 | 6 | 65 | 45 | 54 |
| Den Haag | 32 | 16 | 6 | 10 | 61 | 48 | 54 |
| Groningen | 32 | 16 | 5 | 11 | 61 | 50 | 53 |
| Utrecht | 32 | 12 | 8 | 12 | 49 | 47 | 44 |
| Heracles | 32 | 12 | 7 | 13 | 60 | 55 | 43 |
| Feyenoord | 32 | 12 | 7 | 13 | 50 | 50 | 43 |
| Heerenveen | 32 | 10 | 10 | 12 | 59 | 52 | 40 |
| NEC | 32 | 9 | 12 | 11 | 51 | 55 | 39 |
| NAC* | 32 | 11 | 5 | 16 | 42 | 58 | 37 |
| Vitesse | 32 | 9 | 8 | 15 | 40 | 55 | 35 |
| De Graafschap | 32 | 8 | 11 | 13 | 29 | 51 | 35 |
| Excelsior | 32 | 8 | 5 | 19 | 38 | 64 | 29 |
| VVV | 32 | 5 | 3 | 24 | 31 | 73 | 18 |
| Willem II | 32 | 3 | 6 | 23 | 37 | 93 | 15 |

34-round season (17x2); bottom team will be relegated; 2nd & 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-offs
**1pt deducted for financial mismanagement*

## ISRAEL

Regular season
Apr 2: Acre 0 Maccabi Haifa 2; Ramat Gan 1 Ashdod 2; Ashkelon 2 Beitar 1; Netanya 2 Maccabi Petah Tikva 2; Kiryat Shmona 1 Be'er Sheva 0; Bnei Yehuda 2 Maccabi Tel Aviv 0.
Apr 3: Hapoel Haifa 4 Bnei Sakhnin 1.
Apr 4: Hapoel Tel Aviv 2 Hapoel Petah Tikva 0.
Apr 9: Maccabi Petah Tikva 2 Maccabi Tel Aviv 2; Be'er Sheva 1 Netanya 2; Beitar 2 Acre 0; Bnei Sakhnin 2 Ashkelon 0; Ashdod 0 Hapoel Haifa 0; Hapoel Tel Aviv 0 Bnei Yehuda 1.
Apr 10: Hapoel Petah Tikva 2 Ramat Gan 0.
Apr 11: Maccabi Haifa 3 Kiryat Shmona 2.
Apr 16: Maccabi Tel Aviv 0 Be'er Sheva 2; Kiryat Shmona 0 Beitar 1; Ashkelon 4 Ashdod 1; Hapoel Haifa 3 Hapoel Petah Tikva 2; Acre 0 Bnei Sakhnin 0; Ramat Gan 1 Hapoel Tel Aviv 2.
Apr 17: Bnei Yehuda 2 Maccabi Petah Tikva 0; Netanya 1 Maccabi Haifa 1.

ISRAEL – REGULAR – FINAL

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| M Haifa | 30 | 21 | 7 | 2 | 55 | 25 | 70 |
| H Tel Aviv | 30 | 20 | 5 | 5 | 65 | 27 | 65 |
| M Tel Aviv | 30 | 15 | 5 | 10 | 41 | 33 | 50 |
| Kiryat Shmona | 30 | 13 | 9 | 8 | 50 | 34 | 48 |
| Bnei Yehuda | 30 | 13 | 9 | 8 | 33 | 27 | 48 |
| Netanya | 30 | 11 | 11 | 8 | 39 | 33 | 44 |
| H Haifa | 30 | 12 | 8 | 10 | 38 | 37 | 44 |
| M Petah Tikva | 30 | 11 | 9 | 10 | 50 | 39 | 42 |
| Acre | 30 | 10 | 11 | 9 | 43 | 38 | 41 |
| Be'er Sheva | 30 | 10 | 8 | 12 | 36 | 38 | 38 |
| Beitar | 30 | 10 | 8 | 12 | 30 | 32 | 38 |
| H Petah Tikva | 30 | 9 | 6 | 15 | 36 | 51 | 33 |
| Ashdod | 30 | 8 | 9 | 13 | 36 | 52 | 33 |
| Ashkelon | 30 | 7 | 5 | 18 | 29 | 56 | 26 |
| Bnei Sakhnin | 30 | 6 | 7 | 17 | 19 | 40 | 25 |
| Ramat Gan* | 30 | 1 | 9 | 20 | 18 | 56 | 8 |

Top 6 formed championship group; 7th to 10th formed "placement" group; bottom 6 formed relegation group
**4pts deducted for contract irregularities*

Championship group
Apr 23: Maccabi Tel Aviv 3 Kiryat Shmona 1; Maccabi Haifa 1 Netanya 2.
Apr 26: Hapoel Tel Aviv 2 Bnei Yehuda 1.

ISRAEL – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| H Tel Aviv | 31 | 21 | 5 | 5 | 67 | 28 | 36 |
| M Haifa | 31 | 21 | 7 | 3 | 56 | 27 | 35 |
| M Tel Aviv | 31 | 16 | 5 | 10 | 44 | 34 | 28 |
| Netanya | 31 | 12 | 11 | 8 | 41 | 34 | 25 |
| Kiryat Shmona | 31 | 13 | 9 | 9 | 51 | 37 | 24 |
| Bnei Yehuda | 31 | 13 | 9 | 9 | 34 | 29 | 24 |

5-round stage; winners will be champions
*Teams carried forward half their points (rounded up) and full games and goals record from regular season*

## ITALY

Saturday, April 2
**Brescia 3** (Hetemaj 2, Zoboli 8, Caracciolo pen 64)
**Bologna 1** (Di Vaio 29) Att: 7,000

**Milan 3** (Alexandre Pato 1, 62, Cassano pen 90)
**Internazionale 0** Att: 80,018

Sunday, April 3
**Catania 4** (Balzaretti og 47, Bergessio 61, Ledesma 66, Pesce 76)
**Palermo 0** Att: 19,136

**Cesena 2** (Jimenez 18, Caserta 85)
**Fiorentina 2** (Gilardino 35, Montolivo 69) Att: 17,876

**Chievo 0**
**Sampdoria 0** Att: 14,456

**Genoa 0**
**Cagliari 1** (Acquafresca 16) Att: 22,141

**Lecce 2** (Bertolacci 48, 64)
**Udinese 0** Att: 10,196

**Napoli 4** (Dossena 60, Cavani 62, pen 82, 87)
**Lazio 3** (Mauri 29, Dias 56, Aronica og 67) Att: 57,155

**Parma 1** (Amauri 79)
**Bari 2** (Parisi 64, Alvarez 90+3) Att: 18,195

**Roma 0**
**Juventus 2** (Krasic 59, Matri 74) Att: 50,952

Saturday, April 9
**Internazionale 2** (Cambiasso 66, Maicon 84)
**Chievo 0** Att: 61,456

**Udinese 1** (Di Natale 87)
**Roma 2** (Totti pen 57, 90+4) Att: 24,000

Sunday, April 10
**Bari 1** (Gazzi 34)
**Catania 1** (Lopez 43) Att: 15,000

**Bologna 0**
**Napoli 2** (Mascara 30, Hamsik pen 45) Att: 33,000

**Cagliari 1** (Cossu 22)
**Brescia 1** (Caracciolo 61) Att: 10,000

**Fiorentina 1** (Vargas 79)
**Milan 2** (Seedorf 8, Alexandre Pato 41) Att: 32,677

**Juventus 3** (Pepe 50, Matri 63, Toni 83)
**Genoa 2** (Bonucci og 7, Floro Flores 57) Att: 20,000

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coaching career off to a winning start as Skonto beat Gulbene 2-1 in their opening fixture of the new league season.

LIECHTENSTEIN

### Euro spot booked

Vaduz secured their place in next season's Europa League qualifying rounds with a 5-0 victory over Eschen/Mauren in the Liechtensteiner Cup Final.

The club from the country's capital, who play in the Swiss second division, lifted the trophy for the 41st time in 66 years.

MALTA

### Briffa secures title

Valletta won the league title for a 20th time with three games to spare thanks to a 1-0 victory at home to Marsaxlokk. Roderick Briffa's goal extended their unbeaten run in the Premier League to 30 matches. Their last defeat was to outgoing champions Birkirkara in March 2010.

PORTUGAL

### Porto run continues

Porto clinched their fifth league championship in the last six years as goals from Fredy Guarin and Hulk gave them a 2-1 win away to defending champions and nearest challengers Benfica, who had been protecting an 11-match unbeaten run at the Estadio da Luz.

However, the home side more than met their match in Andre Villas-Boas' side, who are undefeated in the league since February 2010 – a 34-match streak.

Champions again...Porto

**Lazio 2** (Hernanes 23, Floccari 77)
**Parma 0** Att: 35,000

**Palermo 2** (Kurtic 5, Pinilla 36)
**Cesena 2** (Parolo 90+2, Giaccherini 90+6)
Att: 25,000

**Sampdoria 1** (Maccarone 69)
**Lecce 2** (Di Michele 38, Olivera 65) Att: 26,638

**Saturday, April 16**

**Milan 3** (Seedorf 19, Cassano pen 53, Robinho 60)
**Sampdoria 0** Att: 60,028

**Parma 2** (Giovinco 34, Amauri 85)
**Internazionale 0** Att: 17,504

**Roma 2** (Totti pen 20, Vucinic 90+2)
**Palermo 3** (Pinilla pen 42, Hernandez 84, 89)
Att: 33,851

**Sunday, April 17**

**Catania 1** (Schelotto 46)
**Lazio 4** (Hernanes 40, Mauri 56, Floccari 78, Zarate 89) Att: 14,014

**Cesena 1** (Bogdani 48)
**Bari 0** Att: 15,699

**Chievo 2** (Constant 14, Marcolini 83)
**Bologna 0** Att: 10,846

**Fiorentina 0**
**Juventus 0** Att: 34,483

**Genoa 3** (Rafinha 58, Berardi og 69, Antonelli 90+4)
**Brescia 0** Att: 21,540

**Lecce 3** (Mesbah 49, Fabiano 88, Corvia 90+4)
**Cagliari 3** (Acquafresca 19, 71, Conti 66)
Att: 12,672

**Napoli 1** (Mascara 90+5)
**Udinese 2** (Inler 54, Denis 60) Att: 56,757

**Saturday, April 23**

**Bari 0**
**Sampdoria 1** (Pozzi pen 59) Att: 10,000

**Bologna 0**
**Cesena 2** (Giaccherini 47, Malonga 84) Att: 21,458

**Brescia 0**
**Milan 1** (Robinho 81) Att: 23,000

**Cagliari 1** (Cossu 46)
**Fiorentina 2** (Cerci 45+1, 50) Att: 8,000

**Genoa 4** (Floro Flores 10, 61, Palacio 41, 53)
**Lecce 2** (Di Michele 3, 29) Att: 21,369

**Internazionale 2** (Sneijder 39, Eto'o 52)
**Lazio 1** (Zarate pen 24) Att: 57,830

**Juventus 2** (Del Piero pen 18, 38)
**Catania 2** (Gomez 80, Lodi 90+5) Att: 23,411

**Palermo 2** (Balzaretti 37, Bovo pen 45)
**Napoli 1** (Cavani pen 2) Att: 26,778

**Roma 1** (Perrotta 4)
**Chievo 0** Att: 27,319

**Udinese 0**
**Parma 2** (Amauri 13, 90+1) Att: 18,000

**ITALY**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Milan | 34 | 22 | 8 | 4 | 60 | 23 | 74 |
| Inter | 34 | 20 | 6 | 8 | 60 | 38 | 66 |
| Napoli | 34 | 20 | 5 | 9 | 54 | 34 | 65 |
| Lazio | 34 | 18 | 6 | 10 | 46 | 32 | 60 |
| Udinese | 34 | 18 | 5 | 11 | 59 | 37 | 59 |
| Roma | 34 | 16 | 8 | 10 | 52 | 47 | 56 |
| Juventus | 34 | 14 | 11 | 9 | 52 | 42 | 53 |
| Palermo | 34 | 15 | 5 | 14 | 52 | 55 | 50 |
| Fiorentina | 34 | 11 | 13 | 10 | 40 | 36 | 46 |
| Genoa | 34 | 12 | 9 | 13 | 38 | 39 | 45 |
| Cagliari | 34 | 12 | 8 | 14 | 42 | 42 | 44 |
| Bologna* | 34 | 11 | 10 | 13 | 34 | 46 | 40 |
| Chievo | 34 | 9 | 12 | 13 | 32 | 35 | 39 |
| Parma | 34 | 9 | 11 | 14 | 34 | 45 | 38 |
| Cesena | 34 | 9 | 10 | 15 | 32 | 45 | 37 |
| Catania | 34 | 9 | 10 | 15 | 33 | 47 | 37 |
| Sampdoria | 34 | 8 | 11 | 15 | 27 | 39 | 35 |
| Lecce | 34 | 9 | 8 | 17 | 40 | 60 | 35 |
| Brescia | 34 | 7 | 9 | 18 | 28 | 44 | 30 |
| Bari (R) | 34 | 4 | 9 | 21 | 20 | 49 | 21 |

38-round season (19x2); bottom 3 will be relegated
**3pts deducted – 1pt for failing to pay tax on players' salaries, 2pts for failing to pay players' salaries*

**LEADING GOALSCORERS**

26 Edinson Cavani (Napoli)
26 Antonio Di Natale (Udinese)
20 Samuel Eto'o (Internazionale)
19 Marco Di Vaio (Bologna)

## ITALIAN CUP

**Semi-finals**

*1st legs*
Apr 19: Roma 0 Internazionale 1.
Apr 20: Milan 2 Palermo 2.

## NORWAY

Apr 1: Valerenga 2 Aalesund 0.
Apr 2: Fredrikstad 0 Viking 1.
Apr 3: Haugesund 4 Sarpsborg 2; Start 5 Stromsgodset 1; Sogndal 1 Odd Grenland 4; Molde 2 Tromso 0; Rosenborg 1 Stabaek 2.
Apr 4: Lillestrom 1 Brann 4.
Apr 8: Stabaek 1 Valerenga 0.
Apr 9: Brann 0 Fredrikstad 1.
Apr 10: Stromsgodset 2 Odd Grenland 0; Tromso 2 Start 0; Aalesund 1 Haugesund 0; Sarpsborg 1 Sogndal 0; Rosenborg 4 Lillestrom 4.
Apr 11: Viking 2 Molde 2.
Apr 16: Haugesund 3 Brann 3.
Apr 16: Start 4 Viking 0.
Apr 17: Sogndal 0 Tromso 0; Stromsgodset 5 Sarpsborg 2; Odd Grenland 2 Aalesund 2; Molde 3 Stabaek 2; Valerenga 1 Lillestrom 1.
Apr 18: Fredrikstad 2 Rosenborg 0.
Apr 25: Lillestrom 5 Haugesund 0; Tromso 2 Odd Grenland 1; Aalesund 1 Sogndal 0; Brann 1 Molde 3; Sarpsborg 2 Start 0; Viking 0 Stromsgodset 1; Stabaek 3 Fredrikstad 1; Rosenborg 2 Valerenga 0.

**NORWAY**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Stromsgodset | 5 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 11 | 8 | 12 |
| Tromso | 5 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 8 | 3 | 11 |
| Start | 5 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 11 | 5 | 9 |
| Sarpsborg | 5 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 10 | 9 | 9 |
| Fredrikstad | 5 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 9 |
| Stabaek | 5 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 8 | 12 | 9 |
| Lillestrom | 5 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 18 | 9 | 8 |
| Molde | 5 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 10 | 10 | 8 |
| Brann | 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 10 | 9 | 7 |
| Valerenga | 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 7 |
| Aalesund | 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Rosenborg | 5 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 8 | 10 | 4 |
| Odd Grenland | 5 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 7 | 9 | 4 |
| Haugesund | 5 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 7 | 13 | 4 |
| Viking | 5 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 9 | 4 |
| Sogndal | 5 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 8 | 1 |

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

## POLAND

Apr 1: Lechia 0 Belchatow 0; Lech 2 Slask 2.
Apr 2: Zaglebie 2 Polonia Bytom 0; Legia 2 Ruch 3; Widzew 0 Arka 0; Korona 1 Polonia Warsaw 3.
Apr 3: Wisla 2 Jagiellonia 0; Gornik 1 Cracovia 0.
Apr 8: Belchatow 1 Gornik 1; Polonia Warsaw 1 Lech 0.
Apr 9: Ruch 0 Polonia Bytom 2; Cracovia 3 Lechia 0; Legia 2 Zaglebie 2; Slask 2 Widzew 2.
Apr 10: Korona 2 Wisla 2; Jagiellonia 1 Arka 0.
Apr 15: Wisla 3 Belchatow 1; Gornik 0 Lechia 0.
Apr 16: Polonia Bytom 0 Polonia Warsaw 2; Lech 1 Legia 0; Widzew 0 Ruch 0; Zaglebie 0 Jagiellonia 2.
Apr 17: Arka 3 Cracovia 0; Slask 0 Korona 1.
Apr 20: Jagiellonia 2 Gornik 0.
Apr 21: Cracovia 2 Zaglebie 2; Slask 2 Wisla 0.
Apr 23: Korona 0 Ruch 1; Lechia 2 Legia 1; Widzew 3 Polonia Bytom 1; Lech 0 Belchatow 0; Polonia Warsaw 4 Arka 0.

**POLAND**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Wisla | 23 | 13 | 5 | 5 | 36 | 23 | 44 |
| Jagiellonia | 23 | 12 | 5 | 6 | 29 | 20 | 41 |
| Lechia | 23 | 10 | 5 | 8 | 29 | 25 | 35 |
| Polonia W | 23 | 9 | 6 | 8 | 33 | 22 | 33 |
| Lech | 23 | 9 | 6 | 8 | 27 | 18 | 33 |
| Slask | 23 | 8 | 9 | 6 | 32 | 28 | 33 |
| Legia | 23 | 10 | 2 | 11 | 29 | 34 | 32 |
| Gornik | 23 | 9 | 5 | 9 | 24 | 34 | 32 |
| Korona | 23 | 8 | 7 | 8 | 29 | 33 | 31 |
| Ruch | 23 | 8 | 7 | 8 | 22 | 22 | 31 |
| Belchatow | 23 | 8 | 7 | 8 | 25 | 25 | 31 |
| Widzew | 23 | 7 | 9 | 7 | 32 | 25 | 30 |
| Zaglebie | 23 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 23 | 29 | 29 |
| Polonia B | 23 | 5 | 8 | 10 | 22 | 31 | 23 |
| Arka | 23 | 5 | 8 | 10 | 15 | 26 | 23 |
| Cracovia | 23 | 5 | 5 | 13 | 28 | 40 | 20 |

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

## PORTUGAL

Mar 27: Olhanense 0 Braga 2.
Apr 1: Uniao Leiria 1 Maritimo 3.
Apr 2: Academica 1 Portimonense 0; Beira Mar 1 Braga 2.
Apr 3: Olhanense 1 Naval 3; Rio Ave 2 Setubal 0; Guimaraes 1 Sporting 1; Benfica 1 Porto 2.
Apr 4: Nacional 1 Pacos Ferreira 0.
Apr 8: Maritimo 1 Nacional 1.
Apr 9: Sporting 2 Academica 0.
Apr 10: Pacos Ferreira 1 Rio Ave 6; Setubal 4 Uniao Leiria 1; Beira Mar 1 Olhanense 0; Portimonense 2 Porto 3; Naval 2 Benfica 1.
Apr 11: Braga 3 Guimaraes 1.
Apr 15: Academica 1 Setubal 1.
Apr 16: Olhanense 0 Pacos Ferreira 0; Guimaraes 2 Maritimo 0.
Apr 17: Rio Ave 1 Naval 0; Uniao Leiria 0 Portimonense 1; Benfica 2 Beira Mar 1; Porto 3 Sporting 2.
Apr 18: Nacional 1 Braga 1.

**PORTUGAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Porto (C) | 27 | 25 | 2 | 0 | 64 | 13 | 77 |
| Benfica | 27 | 19 | 1 | 7 | 55 | 26 | 58 |
| Braga | 27 | 13 | 5 | 9 | 45 | 32 | 44 |
| Sporting | 27 | 11 | 9 | 7 | 38 | 29 | 42 |
| Guimaraes | 27 | 10 | 7 | 10 | 31 | 35 | 37 |
| Rio Ave | 27 | 10 | 6 | 11 | 31 | 28 | 36 |
| Nacional | 27 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 24 | 29 | 36 |
| P Ferreira | 27 | 8 | 10 | 9 | 25 | 37 | 34 |
| Maritimo | 27 | 8 | 8 | 11 | 32 | 29 | 32 |
| Beira Mar | 27 | 7 | 11 | 9 | 31 | 32 | 32 |
| Uniao Leiria | 27 | 8 | 6 | 13 | 21 | 35 | 30 |
| Academica | 27 | 7 | 8 | 12 | 31 | 42 | 29 |
| Olhanense | 27 | 6 | 11 | 10 | 20 | 31 | 29 |
| Setubal | 27 | 6 | 10 | 11 | 25 | 37 | 28 |
| Naval | 27 | 5 | 8 | 14 | 25 | 45 | 23 |
| Portimonense | 27 | 5 | 7 | 15 | 26 | 44 | 22 |

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

## PORTUGUESE CUP

**Semi-finals**

*1st legs - Feb 2/3; 2nd legs - Mar 27/Apr 20*
Guimaraes v Academica 1-0, 0-0 (agg 1-0)
Porto v Benfica 0-2, 3-1 (agg 3-3; Porto on away goals)

## REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Mar 25: Derry 0 Shamrock 0; Sligo 2 Drogheda 0; UCD 0 Bray 1; St Patrick's 3 Dundalk 2; Bohemians 0 Galway 1.
Apr 1: St Patrick's 0 Bohemians 0; Galway 0 Sligo 1; Drogheda 0 Shamrock 4; Dundalk 3 UCD 1; Bray 1 Derry 2.
Apr 8: Derry 2 Dundalk 0; Drogheda 1 Galway 1; UCD 0 Bohemians 2; Shamrock 0 Bray 1.
Apr 9: Sligo 2 St Patrick's 0.
Apr 15: Bohemians 1 Shamrock 1; Bray 2 Drogheda 1; Dundalk 1 Sligo 1; Galway 1 Derry 4; St Patrick's 1 UCD 1.
Apr 22: Sligo 1 Bohemians 2; Bray 2 Galway 0; Derry 1 St Patrick's 1; Drogheda 1 Dundalk 2; Shamrock 3 UCD 1.

**REPUBLIC OF IRELAND**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Shamrock | 8 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 14 | 4 | 17 |
| Bray | 8 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 11 | 8 | 16 |
| Derry | 8 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 13 | 6 | 15 |
| Bohemians | 8 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 9 | 4 | 15 |
| Sligo | 8 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 8 | 4 | 14 |
| Dundalk | 8 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 12 | 13 | 11 |
| St Patrick's | 8 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 10 | 11 | 9 |
| UCD | 8 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 12 | 5 |
| Galway | 8 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 14 | 5 |
| Drogheda | 8 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 15 | 2 |

36-round season (9x4); bottom team will be relegated; 2nd & 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-offs

## ROMANIA

Apr 1: Astra 2 Victoria 0; Vaslui 2 Urziceni 0; Brasov 1 Otelul 0; Univ Cluj 2 Dinamo 1.
Apr 2: Tirgu-Mures 2 Gloria 0; Sportul 3 Univ Craiova 0; Timisoara 0 Steaua 0.
Apr 3: Pandurii 2 CFR 1; Rapid 2 Gaz Metan 1.
Apr 5: Victoria 1 Sportul 1; Gloria 2 Univ Cluj 4; Steaua 5 Urziceni 0.

Punished for error...Zenit

RUSSIA

### Not enough kids

Defending champions Zenit were punished by the Russian Premier League's disciplinary panel for failing to field a young home-grown player – which means one that was born after 1990 – in their 1-1 draw with CSKA Moscow. The result was changed to a 3-0 win for CSKA.

SERBIA

### Double in sight

Partizan remain on course for a domestic double after they reached the Serbian Cup Final with a 2-1 aggregate semi-final win over Belgrade rivals Red Star. They will now face Vojvodina, who won their semi-final against Sloboda Sevojno 3-1, on May 10.

In the league, a solitary goal from Prince Tagoe give Partizan a 1-0 victory over Red Star to open up a three-point lead with six games to play.

Partizan hero...Prince Tagoe

SPAIN

### First Real trophy

Real Madrid won their first silverware since 2008, ensuring coach Jose Mourinho will end his debut season in Spain with at least

CLUB FOOTBALL

Apr 6: Gaz Metan 0 Tirgu-Mures 0; Timisoara 2 Astra 2; Otelul 0 Vaslui 0; Dinamo 2 Brasov 1.
Apr 7: Univ Craiova 0 Pandurii 2; CFR 0 Rapid 1.
Apr 9: Urziceni 0 Otelul 3; Vaslui 2 Dinamo 0; Brasov 0 Gloria 1; Univ Cluj 2 Gaz Metan 2.
Apr 10: Pandurii 4 Victoria 2; Sportul 2 Timisoara 3; Astra 1 Steaua 0.
Apr 11: Tirgu-Mures 0 CFR 0; Rapid 0 Univ Craiova 0.
Apr 12: Dinamo 3 Urziceni 1; Gloria 1 Vaslui 1.
Apr 13: Astra 1 Sportul 0; Gaz Metan 0 Brasov 0; Timisoara 2 Pandurii 2; Steaua 1 Otelul 0.
Apr 14: Univ Craiova 2 Tirgu-Mures 1; Victoria 0 Rapid 0; CFR 1 Univ Cluj 1.
Apr 15: Urziceni 2 Gloria 1.
Apr 16: Otelul 3 Dinamo 3; Pandurii 1 Astra 0; Sportul 1 Steaua 2.
Apr 17: Tirgu-Mures 4 Victoria 0; Brasov 2 CFR 2; Rapid 3 Timisoara 2.
Apr 18: Univ Cluj 3 Univ Craiova 0; Vaslui 3 Gaz Metan 0.
Apr 22: Sportul 2 Pandurii 1; Astra 0 Rapid 0.
Apr 23: Victoria 0 Univ Cluj 2; CFR 1 Vaslui 0; Timisoara 0 Tirgu-Mures 0.
Apr 24: Gloria 0 Otelul 0; Gaz Metan 2 Urziceni 0; Univ Craiova 1 Brasov 2.
Apr 25: Steaua 0 Dinamo 1.

**ROMANIA**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Otelul | 28 | 16 | 6 | 6 | 36 | 20 | 54 |
| Timisoara | 28 | 13 | 14 | 1 | 50 | 32 | 53 |
| Vaslui | 28 | 14 | 9 | 5 | 39 | 22 | 51 |
| Dinamo | 28 | 13 | 8 | 7 | 57 | 43 | 47 |
| Rapid | 28 | 12 | 10 | 6 | 37 | 19 | 46 |
| Steaua | 28 | 13 | 7 | 8 | 36 | 23 | 46 |
| Gaz Metan | 28 | 11 | 10 | 7 | 32 | 26 | 43 |
| CFR | 28 | 9 | 11 | 8 | 40 | 34 | 38 |
| Astra | 28 | 8 | 14 | 6 | 28 | 25 | 38 |
| Univ Cluj | 28 | 10 | 8 | 10 | 40 | 47 | 38 |
| Tirgu-Mures | 28 | 9 | 8 | 11 | 29 | 36 | 35 |
| Brasov | 28 | 7 | 13 | 8 | 28 | 31 | 34 |
| Pandurii | 28 | 8 | 9 | 11 | 31 | 39 | 33 |
| Gloria | 28 | 8 | 8 | 12 | 30 | 38 | 32 |
| Univ Craiova | 28 | 6 | 8 | 14 | 28 | 39 | 26 |
| Victoria | 28 | 4 | 10 | 14 | 29 | 50 | 22 |
| Urziceni | 28 | 5 | 7 | 16 | 18 | 45 | 22 |
| Sportul | 28 | 5 | 2 | 21 | 28 | 47 | 17 |

34-round season (17x2); bottom 4 will be relegated

## RUSSIA

**Regular season**

Apr 2: Amkar 1 Krylia Sovetov 1; Volga 3 Dynamo 0; Lokomotiv 1 Rostov 1; Kuban 3 Spartak Moscow 1.
Apr 3: Spartak Nalchik 2 Zenit 2; Anzhi 1 Rubin 0; CSKA 1 Krasnodar 1.
Apr 4: Terek 2 Tom 0.
Apr 9: Krylia Sovetov 1 Lokomotiv 0; Krasnodar 1 Amkar 0; Dynamo 1 Kuban 0.
Apr 10: Rostov 1 Volga 3; Rubin 0 Spartak Nalchik 0; Zenit 0 CSKA 3; Spartak Moscow 0 Terek 0.
Apr 11: Tom 0 Anzhi 0.
Apr 16: Krylia Sovetov 0 Krasnodar 0; Kuban 2 Rostov 0; Terek 0 Dynamo 0.
Apr 17: Amkar 1 Zenit 3; Lokomotiv 1 Volga 0; CSKA 2 Rubin 0; Anzhi 2 Spartak Moscow 1.
Apr 18: Spartak Nalchik 1 Tom 2.
Apr 23: Volga 0 Kuban 1; Rostov 1 Terek 0; Krasnodar 1 Lokomotiv 4.
Apr 24: Tom 1 CSKA 1; Rubin 1 Amkar 1; Zenit 3 Krylia Sovetov 0; Spartak Moscow 1 Spartak Nalchik 0.
Apr 25: Dynamo 2 Anzhi 2.

**RUSSIA**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Zenit | 6 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 11 | 6 | 13 |
| Kuban | 6 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 12 |
| CSKA | 5 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 9 | 2 | 11 |
| Lokomotiv | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 9 | 6 | 10 |
| Volga | 6 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 8 | 4 | 9 |
| Anzhi | 6 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 9 |
| Krasnodar | 6 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 9 |
| Rubin | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 8 |
| Dynamo | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 | 9 | 8 |
| Rostov | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 8 | 9 | 7 |
| Spartak M | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 9 | 7 |
| Terek | 6 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 5 |
| Spartak N | 6 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 5 |
| Krylia Sovetov | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 5 |
| Amkar | 6 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 8 | 5 |
| Tom | 6 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 5 |

30-round regular season (15x2); top 8 will form championship group; bottom 8 will form relegation group (the bottom 2 of this group will go down; 3rd & 4th bottom of this group will enter rel/prom play-offs)

## SCOTLAND

**Regular season**

Apr 2: Rangers 2 Dundee United 3; Motherwell 2 Aberdeen 1; St Mirren 3 Hamilton 1; St Johnstone 0 Kilmarnock 0.
Apr 3: Hibernian 2 Hearts 2.
Apr 5: St Johnstone 0 Rangers 2.
Apr 6: Celtic 3 Hibernian 1; St Mirren 3 Aberdeen 2; Motherwell 2 Dundee United 1.
Apr 9: Aberdeen 0 Hibernian 1; Celtic 1 St Mirren 0; Dundee United 2 St Johnstone 0; Hearts 0 Motherwell 0; Kilmarnock 1 Inverness 1.
Apr 10: Hamilton 0 Rangers 1.
Apr 12: St Johnstone 0 Celtic 1.
Apr 13: Aberdeen 0 Rangers 1.
Apr 16: Rangers 2 St Mirren 1; Inverness 1 Hearts 1.
Apr 17: Hibernian 1 Hamilton 2.
Apr 19: Dundee United 0 Rangers 4.
Apr 20: Kilmarnock 0 Celtic 4.

*The division split into a championship group (top 6) and a relegation group (bottom 6) at the end of the 33-round* regular season*
**Inverness v Celtic delayed until May 4*

**Championship group**

Apr 23: Dundee United 4 Kilmarnock 2; Hearts 3 Motherwell 3.
Apr 24: Rangers 0 Celtic 0.

**SCOTLAND – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rangers | 34 | 26 | 3 | 5 | 72 | 28 | 81 |
| Celtic | 33 | 25 | 5 | 3 | 70 | 18 | 80 |
| Hearts | 34 | 18 | 8 | 8 | 50 | 34 | 62 |
| Dundee Utd | 34 | 15 | 10 | 9 | 48 | 43 | 55 |
| Kilmarnock | 34 | 13 | 8 | 13 | 49 | 45 | 47 |
| Motherwell | 34 | 13 | 6 | 15 | 39 | 46 | 45 |

5-round stage; winners will be champions
*Teams carried forward full record from regular season*

**Relegation group**

Apr 24: Hibernian 1 St Mirren 1.
Apr 25: Hamilton 1 Aberdeen 1; St Johnstone 0 Inverness 3.

**SCOTLAND – RELEGATION GROUP**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Inverness | 33 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 44 | 40 | 41 |
| Hibernian | 34 | 10 | 7 | 17 | 37 | 53 | 37 |
| St Johnstone | 34 | 8 | 10 | 16 | 18 | 42 | 34 |
| Aberdeen | 34 | 9 | 5 | 20 | 35 | 55 | 32 |
| St Mirren | 34 | 7 | 8 | 19 | 32 | 55 | 29 |
| Hamilton | 34 | 3 | 11 | 20 | 21 | 56 | 20 |

5-round stage; bottom team will be relegated
*Teams carried forward full record from regular season*

## SERBIA

Apr 2: Javor 0 Red Star 2; Sloboda Sevojno 0 Spartak 1; Indjija 1 OFK 2; Cukaricki 0 Smederevo 1; Metalac 0 Vojvodina 1; Partizan 2 Borac 0.
Apr 3: BSK 1 Jagodina 0; Hajduk 0 Rad 1.
Apr 9: Jagodina 0 Javor 1; Vojvodina 3 Sloboda Sevojno 1; BSK 4 Indjija 0; Smederevo 1 Metalac 0; Borac 1 Hajduk 0.
Apr 10: Rad 2 OFK 0; Spartak 1 Partizan 2; Red Star 4 Cukaricki 0.
Apr 16: Metalac 0 Red Star 1; OFK 2 Borac 1; Sloboda Sevojno 2 Smederevo 1; Javor 0 BSK 0; Hajduk 1 Spartak 0; Indjija 1 Rad 1; Cukaricki 1 Jagodina 3; Partizan 0 Vojvodina 1.
Apr 20: Spartak 3 OFK 1; BSK 3 Cukaricki 1; Smederevo 1 Partizan 4; Borac 0 Rad 0; Jagodina 0 Metalac 2; Vojvodina 2 Hajduk 1; Javor 2 Indjija 1; Red Star 5 Sloboda Sevojno 1.
Apr 23: Rad 1 Spartak 1; Partizan 1 Red Star 0; Cukaricki 0 Javor 1; OFK 1 Vojvodina 0; Sloboda Sevojno 2 Jagodina 0; Indjija 2 Borac 0; Hajduk 2 Smederevo 0; Metalac 2 BSK 0.

**SERBIA**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Partizan | 24 | 20 | 2 | 2 | 61 | 18 | 62 |
| Red Star | 24 | 19 | 2 | 3 | 43 | 12 | 59 |
| Vojvodina | 24 | 17 | 5 | 2 | 38 | 10 | 56 |
| Rad | 24 | 12 | 9 | 3 | 33 | 13 | 45 |
| Spartak | 24 | 9 | 9 | 6 | 25 | 17 | 36 |
| OFK | 24 | 10 | 4 | 10 | 22 | 24 | 34 |
| Javor | 24 | 8 | 9 | 7 | 18 | 19 | 33 |
| Smederevo | 24 | 7 | 10 | 7 | 22 | 25 | 31 |
| S Sevojno | 24 | 8 | 7 | 9 | 27 | 31 | 31 |
| BSK | 24 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 20 | 29 | 29 |
| Jagodina | 24 | 7 | 6 | 11 | 19 | 24 | 27 |
| Borac | 24 | 5 | 10 | 9 | 14 | 25 | 25 |
| Metalac | 24 | 5 | 4 | 15 | 15 | 32 | 19 |
| Hajduk | 24 | 4 | 6 | 14 | 17 | 32 | 18 |
| Indjija | 24 | 4 | 5 | 15 | 21 | 40 | 17 |
| Cukaricki | 24 | 0 | 4 | 20 | 7 | 51 | 4 |

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

## SPAIN

**Saturday, April 2**

**Getafe 2** (Manu 12, Sardinero 88)
**Valencia 4** (Soldado 45+1, 64, 65, 76) Att: 12,000

**Real Madrid 0**
**Sporting Gijon 1** (De las Cuevas 79) Att: 77,000

**Villarreal 0**
**Barcelona 1** (Pique 66) Att: 23,000

**Sunday, April 3**

**Deportivo La Coruna 2** (Xisco 54, Nouioui 66)
**Mallorca 1** (Webo 27) Att: 22,000

**Espanyol 1** (Osvaldo pen 37)
**Racing Santander 2** (Colsa 50, Dos Santos 75) Att: 24,427

**Levante 3** (Stuani 5, 71, Ruben Suarez 9)
**Malaga 1** (Fernandez 61) Att: 11,000

**Osasuna 2** (Kike Sola 31, Nekounam pen 80)
**Atletico Madrid 3** (Diego Costa 37, 59, 63) Att: 15,686

**Real Sociedad 1** (Ifran 90+3)
**Hercules 3** (Portillo 70, Drenthe 83, 88) Att: 24,000

**Sevilla 3** (Perotti 43, Kanoute pen 56, Negredo pen 90+3)
**Zaragoza 1** (Jarosik 47) Att: 30,000

**Monday, April 4**

**Almeria 1** (Piatti 6)
**Athletic Bilbao 3** (Munain 29, Toquero 51, Orbaiz 59) Att: 10,564

**Saturday, April 9**

**Athletic Bilbao 0**
**Real Madrid 3** (Kaka pen 12, pen 54, Cristiano Ronaldo 69) Att: 39,500

**Barcelona 3** (Messi pen 52, 90+1, Thiago 63)
**Almeria 1** (Corona 50) Att: 80,452

**Mallorca 2** (Ienaga 15, De Guzman 43)
**Sevilla 2** (Negredo pen 30, Rakitic 67) Att: 15,000

**Sunday, April 10**

**Atletico Madrid 3** (Filipe Luis 12, Mario Suarez 45, Aguero 77)
**Real Sociedad 0** Att: 50,000

**Hercules 0**
**Espanyol 0** Att: 20,000

**Malaga 0**
**Deportivo La Coruna 0** Att: 27,000

**Racing Santander 1** (Nano og 31)
**Levante 1** (Rafa Jorda 90) Att: 18,000

**Sporting Gijon 1** (David Barral 66)
**Osasuna 0** Att: 24,000

**Valencia 5** (Soldado 13, 74, Mata 56, 73, Banega 61)
**Villarreal 0** Att: 45,000

**Monday, April 11**

**Zaragoza 2** (Ponzio 13, Bertolo 35)
**Getafe 1** (Casquero 45) Att: 25,000

**Saturday, April 16**

**Almeria 0**
**Valencia 3** (Soldado 51, Stankevicius 67, Jordi Alba 80) Att: 10,562

**Getafe 1** (Fedor 76)
**Sevilla 0** Att: 13,000

**Malaga 3** (Fernandez 25, Julio Baptista 39, 57)
**Mallorca 0** Att: 27,000

**Real Madrid 1** (Cristiano Ronaldo pen 81)
**Barcelona 1** (Messi pen 53) Att: 79,500

**Sunday, April 17**

**Deportivo La Coruna 2** (Nouioui 45+1, Xisco 49)
**Racing Santander 0** Att: 23,000

**Espanyol 2** (Osvaldo 37, 57)
**Atletico Madrid 2** (Koke 2, Aguero 49) Att: 35,000

**Levante 2** (Ruben Suarez 5, Juanlu 42)
**Hercules 1** (Trezeguet 81) Att: 14,098

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Copa king...Cristiano Ronaldo

## 797 minutes since keeper Petr Bolek last conceded a goal in the league for the current Slovakian table-toppers Senica

one trophy, by beating Barcelona 1-0 in the Spanish Cup Final, thanks to Cristiano Ronaldo's extra-time header.

However, Mourinho also lost a home league game for the first time in nine years when his side lost 1-0 to Sporting Gijon to end his 150-match unbeaten run which included time spent as coach of Porto, Chelsea and Internazionale.

Barcelona's 1-0 win at Villarreal was their 13th away victory in La Liga this season, equalling the record jointly held by Real Madrid (2009-10), Atletico Madrid (1995-96) and themselves (2008-09 and 2009-10).

SWEDEN

### Bright start for Malmo

Champions Malmo began their Allsvenskan campaign with a 4-2 win at Trelleborg. Wilton Figueiredo, Daniel Larsson (two) and Agon Mehmeti were the scorers.

TURKEY

### Cup date set

Besiktas beat Gaziantepspor 5-2 on aggregate and now face Istanbul BB in the Turkish Cup Final on May 11.

**Osasuna 1** (Kike Sola 51)
**Athletic Bilbao 2** (Llorente 68, Muniain 90)
Att: 18,239

**Real Sociedad 2** (Griezmann 32, 78)
**Sporting Gijon 1** (De las Cuevas 68) Att: 26,000

Monday, April 18
**Villarreal 1** (Rossi pen 71)
**Zaragoza 0** Att: 16,000

Saturday, April 23
**Athletic Bilbao 2** (Muniain 17, Toquero 27)
**Real Sociedad 1** (Javi Martinez og 31) Att: 38,000

**Barcelona 2** (Villa 24, Messi 86)
**Osasuna 0** Att: 73,285

**Valencia 3** (Soldado 60, Jonas 79, Jordi Alba 84)
**Real Madrid 6** (Benzema 23, Higuain 30, 41, 53, Kaka 39, 62) Att: 53,000

Sunday, April 24
**Atletico Madrid 4** (Elias 19, Aguero 50, pen 70, Munua og 84)
**Levante 1** (Calcedo pen 40) Att: 50,000

**Hercules 1** (Tiago Gomes 60)
**Deportivo La Coruna 0** Att: 20,000

**Mallorca 2** (Nunes 25, Ienaga 67)
**Getafe 0** Att: 15,000

**Racing Santander 1** (Rosenberg 73)
**Malaga 2** (Julio Baptista 32, Fernandez 35)
Att: 14,009

**Sevilla 3** (Rakitic 9, Negredo 14, Romaric 62)
**Villarreal 2** (Marchena 57, Rossi 73) Att: 35,000

**Sporting Gijon 1** (Novo 70)
**Espanyol 0** Att: 22,500

Monday, April 26
**Zaragoza 1** (Diego Alves og 69)
**Almeria 0** Att: 30,000

**SPAIN**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Barcelona | 33 | 28 | 4 | 1 | 88 | 17 | 88 |
| Real Madrid | 33 | 25 | 5 | 3 | 79 | 26 | 80 |
| Valencia | 33 | 19 | 6 | 8 | 57 | 41 | 63 |
| Villarreal | 33 | 17 | 6 | 10 | 51 | 39 | 57 |
| Ath Bilbao | 33 | 16 | 3 | 14 | 51 | 47 | 51 |
| At Madrid | 33 | 14 | 7 | 12 | 54 | 44 | 49 |
| Sevilla | 33 | 14 | 7 | 12 | 51 | 49 | 49 |
| Espanyol | 33 | 14 | 3 | 16 | 40 | 46 | 45 |
| Levante | 33 | 12 | 6 | 15 | 37 | 46 | 42 |
| Mallorca | 33 | 12 | 6 | 15 | 35 | 45 | 42 |
| Sporting Gijon | 33 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 31 | 37 | 41 |
| R Sociedad | 33 | 12 | 2 | 19 | 43 | 57 | 38 |
| Dep Coruna | 33 | 9 | 11 | 13 | 27 | 41 | 38 |
| Getafe | 33 | 10 | 7 | 16 | 43 | 53 | 37 |
| R Santander | 33 | 9 | 10 | 14 | 32 | 49 | 37 |
| Zaragoza | 33 | 9 | 9 | 15 | 32 | 45 | 36 |
| Malaga | 33 | 10 | 6 | 17 | 44 | 63 | 36 |
| Osasuna | 33 | 9 | 8 | 16 | 37 | 41 | 35 |
| Hercules | 33 | 9 | 6 | 18 | 30 | 50 | 33 |
| Almeria | 33 | 5 | 11 | 17 | 32 | 58 | 26 |

38-round season (19x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

**LEADING GOALSCORERS**

31 Lionel Messi (Barcelona)
29 Cristiano Ronaldo (Real Madrid)
18 David Villa (Barcelona)
17 Giuseppe Rossi (Villarreal)

**SPANISH CUP**

Final
*Apr 20 - Valencia (Mestalla)*
**Barcelona 0**
**Real Madrid 1** (Cristiano Ronaldo 103)
*Aet.* **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 0-0. **Att:** 53,000.
**Ref:** Undiano Mallenco
*Sent off: Di Maria (Real Madrid) 120min*

## SWEDEN

Apr 2: Halmstads 0 Kalmar 0.
Apr 3: Norrkoping 2 GAIS 0; Mjallby 0 Helsingborgs 1; Syrianska 1 Gefle 1; Trelleborgs 2 Malmo 4.
Apr 4: Elfsborg 2 Hacken 1; Gothenburg 0 Orebro 1; Djurgardens 0 AIK 0.
Apr 8: Orebro 1 Syrianska 0.
Apr 9: Gefle 2 Norrkoping 0; GAIS 4 Trelleborgs 0.
Apr 10: AIK 3 Mjallby 0; Helsingborgs 1 Elfsborg 0; Hacken 3 Gothenburg 1.
Apr 11: Malmo 3 Halmstads 1; Kalmar 3 Djurgardens 2.
Apr 15: Djurgardens 0 Malmo 1.
Apr 16: Halmstads 0 GAIS 2; Mjallby 1 Kalmar 0.
Apr 17: Syrianska 1 Hacken 5; Elfsborg 2 AIK 2; Trelleborgs 1 Norrkoping 2.
Apr 18: Gothenburg 1 Helsingborgs 2; Orebro 2 Gefle 3.
Apr 19: GAIS 2 Djurgardens 1.
Apr 20: Norrkoping 2 Halmstads 0; Malmo 1 Mjallby 0; Kalmar 2 Elfsborg 1.
Apr 21: AIK 2 Gothenburg 0; Gefle 1 Trelleborgs 2; Hacken 1 Orebro 2.
Apr 22: Helsingborgs 1 Syrianska 0.
Apr 24: Djurgardens 1 Norrkoping 3; Mjallby 1 GAIS 1; Elfsborg 3 Malmo 0; Halmstads 1 Trelleborgs 1; Hacken 0 Gefle 0.
Apr 25: Gothenburg 2 Kalmar 0; Orebro 1 Helsingborgs 1.

**SWEDEN**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Helsingborgs | 5 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 2 | 13 |
| Norrkoping | 5 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 9 | 4 | 12 |
| Malmo | 5 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 9 | 6 | 12 |
| GAIS | 5 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 4 | 10 |
| Orebro | 5 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 5 | 10 |
| AIK | 4 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 2 | 8 |
| Gefle | 5 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 5 | 8 |
| Hacken | 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 10 | 6 | 7 |
| Elfsborg | 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 8 | 6 | 7 |
| Kalmar | 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Mjallby | 5 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 4 |
| Trelleborgs | 5 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 12 | 4 |
| Gothenburg | 5 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 8 | 3 |
| Halmstads | 5 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 8 | 2 |
| Djurgardens | 5 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 9 | 1 |
| Syrianska | 4 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 8 | 1 |

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated; 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

## SWITZERLAND

Apr 2: Grasshopper 2 Bellinzona 2; Basle 1 Xamax 0.
Apr 3: Thun 2 Zurich 3; Sion 0 Young Boys 2; Lucerne 1 St Gallen 1.
Apr 9: Bellinzona 1 Thun 1; Lucerne 0 Sion 1.
Apr 10: St Gallen 1 Xamax 1; Young Boys 3 Basle 3; Zurich 1 Grasshopper 0.
Apr 16: Young Boys 4 Bellinzona 0; Sion 0 Zurich 2.
Apr 17: Basle 2 Grasshopper 2; Xamax 2 Lucerne 1; Thun 0 St Gallen 0.
Apr 19: Bellinzona 2 Sion 2; Zurich 2 Young Boys 1.
Apr 20: Grasshopper 1 St Gallen 3; Lucerne 0 Thun 1; Xamax 2 Basle 2.
Apr 23: Lucerne 3 Bellinzona 2; Basle 2 Young Boys 1; St Gallen 0 Sion 1.
Apr 26: Thun 0 Grasshopper 1.

**SWITZERLAND**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Basle | 30 | 18 | 8 | 4 | 64 | 38 | 62 |
| Zurich | 29 | 17 | 7 | 5 | 59 | 37 | 58 |
| Young Boys | 30 | 13 | 9 | 8 | 55 | 42 | 48 |
| Sion | 30 | 13 | 7 | 10 | 39 | 28 | 46 |
| Lucerne | 30 | 12 | 8 | 10 | 54 | 43 | 44 |
| Thun | 30 | 7 | 16 | 7 | 36 | 34 | 37 |
| Grasshopper | 30 | 6 | 10 | 14 | 33 | 47 | 28 |
| Bellinzona | 30 | 6 | 10 | 14 | 37 | 65 | 28 |
| Xamax | 29 | 7 | 6 | 16 | 38 | 53 | 27 |
| St Gallen | 30 | 7 | 5 | 18 | 26 | 54 | 26 |

36-round season (9x4); bottom team will be relegated; 2nd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

## TURKEY

Apr 2: Karabukspor 3 Gaziantepspor 2; Sivasspor 1 Besiktas 0; Ankaragucu 2 Eskisehirspor 2; Trabzonspor 1 Konyaspor 0.
Apr 3: Manisaspor 0 Genclerbirligi 3; Kayserispor 1 Kasimpasa 3; Istanbul BB 2 Bucaspor 1; Fenerbahce 0 Bursaspor 0.
Apr 4: Antalyaspor 3 Galatasaray 0.
Apr 8: Bursaspor 2 Antalyaspor 3.
Apr 9: Bucaspor 2 Karabukspor 1; Konyaspor 0 Manisaspor 0; Eskisehirspor 1 Fenerbahce 3.
Apr 10: Istanbul BB 1 Sivasspor 2; Gaziantepspor 3 Ankaragucu 2; Genclerbirligi 4 Kayserispor 1; Galatasaray 0 Trabzonspor 1.
Apr 11: Kasimpasa 0 Besiktas 1.
Apr 15: Besiktas 2 Genclerbirligi 2.
Apr 16: Ankaragucu 5 Bucaspor 3; Karabukspor 0 Istanbul BB 2; Fenerbahce 1 Gaziantepspor 0.
Apr 17: Sivasspor 1 Kasimpasa 1; Kayserispor 1 Konyaspor 3; Antalyaspor 2 Eskisehirspor 2; Trabzonspor 1 Bursaspor 0.
Apr 18: Manisaspor 2 Galatasaray 3.
Apr 22: Eskisehirspor 0 Trabzonspor 0.
Apr 23: Karabukspor 2 Sivasspor 1; Bursaspor 2 Manisaspor 1; Galatasaray 1 Kayserispor 1.
Apr 24: Genclerbirligi 1 Kasimpasa 1; Gaziantepspor 2 Antalyaspor 1; Istanbul BB 1 Ankaragucu 4; Bucaspor 3 Fenerbahce 5.
Apr 25: Konyaspor 1 Besiktas 1.

**TURKEY**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fenerbahce | 30 | 22 | 4 | 4 | 71 | 31 | 70 |
| Trabzonspor | 30 | 21 | 7 | 2 | 57 | 21 | 70 |
| Bursaspor | 30 | 15 | 10 | 5 | 46 | 25 | 55 |
| Gaziantepspor | 30 | 15 | 7 | 8 | 41 | 29 | 52 |
| Besiktas | 30 | 12 | 8 | 10 | 45 | 35 | 44 |
| Eskisehirspor | 30 | 11 | 11 | 8 | 34 | 32 | 44 |
| Kayserispor | 30 | 12 | 8 | 10 | 39 | 38 | 44 |
| Istanbul BB | 30 | 12 | 4 | 14 | 38 | 39 | 40 |
| Karabukspor | 30 | 11 | 7 | 12 | 44 | 47 | 40 |
| Ankaragucu | 30 | 10 | 9 | 11 | 49 | 52 | 39 |
| Antalyaspor | 30 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 33 | 40 | 37 |
| Galatasaray | 30 | 11 | 4 | 15 | 33 | 41 | 37 |
| Manisaspor | 30 | 11 | 3 | 16 | 42 | 48 | 36 |
| Genclerbirligi | 30 | 9 | 9 | 12 | 38 | 45 | 36 |
| Sivasspor | 30 | 8 | 8 | 14 | 37 | 50 | 32 |
| Bucaspor | 30 | 6 | 6 | 18 | 28 | 53 | 24 |
| Konyaspor | 30 | 4 | 10 | 16 | 24 | 42 | 22 |
| Kasimpasa | 30 | 5 | 7 | 18 | 28 | 59 | 22 |

34-round season (17x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

## UKRAINE

Apr 1: Illichivets 1 Shakhtar 3.
Apr 2: Tavriya 0 Zorya 0; Obolon 1 Arsenal 1; Metalurh Donetsk 3 Dnipro 2; Dynamo 3 Kryvbas 0.
Apr 3: Vorskla 4 Sevastopol 0; Volyn 0 Karpaty 3; Metalist 3 Metalurh Zaporizhya 0.
Apr 8: Zorya 0 Metalist 2.
Apr 9: Sevastopol 4 Volyn 1; Shakhtar 0 Obolon 1; Dnipro 2 Vorskla 0; Arsenal 1 Tavriya 2.
Apr 10: Metalurh Zaporizhya 1 Dynamo 1; Karpaty 3 Illichivets 1; Kryvbas 1 Metalurh Donetsk 0.
Apr 15: Obolon 1 Karpaty 1.
Apr 16: Illichivets 2 Volyn 2; Vorskla 3 Kryvbas 0; Metalist 2 Arsenal 1.
Apr 17: Tavriya 1 Shakhtar 2; Dnipro 2 Sevastopol 2; Metalurh Donetsk 0 Metalurh Zaporizhya 1.
Apr 18: Dynamo 2 Zorya 0.
Apr 22: Metalurh Zaporizhya 2 Vorskla 0; Volyn 1 Obolon 0.
Apr 23: Karpaty 1 Tavriya 0; Shakhtar 2 Metalist 1; Arsenal 0 Dynamo 3; Kryvbas 0 Dnipro 3.
Apr 24: Zorya 0 Metalurh Donetsk 2; Sevastopol 1 Illichivets 0.

**UKRAINE**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Shakhtar | 26 | 22 | 1 | 3 | 50 | 12 | 67 |
| Dynamo | 26 | 17 | 5 | 4 | 48 | 19 | 56 |
| Metalist | 26 | 15 | 5 | 6 | 48 | 24 | 50 |
| Dnipro | 26 | 13 | 8 | 5 | 41 | 20 | 47 |
| Karpaty | 26 | 13 | 7 | 6 | 36 | 25 | 46 |
| Volyn | 26 | 9 | 6 | 11 | 24 | 37 | 33 |
| Tavriya | 26 | 8 | 8 | 10 | 39 | 40 | 32 |
| Metalurh D | 26 | 9 | 5 | 12 | 28 | 36 | 32 |
| Vorskla | 26 | 8 | 7 | 11 | 32 | 29 | 31 |
| Arsenal | 26 | 8 | 7 | 11 | 30 | 35 | 31 |
| Obolon | 26 | 8 | 7 | 11 | 22 | 30 | 31 |
| Zorya | 26 | 6 | 9 | 11 | 26 | 36 | 27 |
| Sevastopol | 26 | 6 | 6 | 14 | 22 | 42 | 24 |
| Kryvbas | 26 | 4 | 11 | 11 | 22 | 40 | 23 |
| Illichivets | 26 | 5 | 8 | 13 | 37 | 59 | 23 |
| Metalurh Z | 26 | 4 | 8 | 16 | 14 | 35 | 18 |

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

# SOUTH AMERICA

## LIBERTADORES CUP

Group 1
*Apr 19*
**Libertad (Par) 2** (Gonzalez 11, Pavlovich 17)
**San Luis (Mex) 0**
**HT:** 2-0. **Ref:** Fagundes (Bra)

*Apr 19*
**Universidad San Martin (Per) 0**
**Once Caldas (Col) 2** (Renteria 16, Mirabaje 75)
**HT:** 0-1. **Ref:** Osses (Chl)
*Sent off: Balbin 81min, Contreras 90min (both San Martin)*

**LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 1 – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Libertad | 6 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 13 | 5 | 14 |
| Once Caldas | 6 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 7 |
| San Martin | 6 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 7 | 11 | 6 |
| San Luis | 6 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 9 | 5 |

Group 2
*Apr 7*
**Gremio (Bra) 2** (Lucio 33, Borges 60)
**Atletico Junior (Col) 0**
**HT:** 1-0. **Ref:** Baldassi (Arg)
*Sent off: Romero (Junior) 66min*

Fiorek1988.com

Hat-trick hero...Stracqualursi

ARGENTINA

### Visiting treble

Denis Stracqualursi's three goals for Tigre in their 3-3 draw at Boca Juniors made him the first visiting player to score a hat-trick in La Bombonera for 14 years.

Elsewhere, goals from Gabriel Hauche and Teofilo Gutierrez enabled Racing to beat arch-rivals Independiente 2-0 in the Avellaneda clasico and end a run of six years without a win over their neighbours.

Velez remain top of the clausura despite losing 3-2 at home to Quilmes.

COLOMBIA

### Eleven-goal thriller

Deportes Tolima may have slipped to fifth in the table, but they had an astonishing victory away to Atletico Huila, going 6-1 ahead in just 37 minutes before eventually winning 7-4.

ARUBA

### Dozen not enough

Despite an emphatic 12-1 win away to Sporting on the third-last day of the season, Britannia were pipped to the title by RCA.

Going into the final day, Britannia, who had a superior goal difference, could only draw 2-2 at home to Nacional, leaving RCA two points clear.

## 9 teams through to the last 16 of this year's Libertadores Cup that are former champions

*Apr 14*
**Atletico Junior 1** (Gomez 76)
**Leon (Per) 1** (Rodriguez 84)
**HT:** 0-0. **Ref:** Vera (Ecu)

*Apr 14*
**Oriente Petrolero (Bol) 3** (Fernandez 51, F Saucedo 75, Arce 80)
**Gremio 0**
**HT:** 0-0. **Ref:** Ponce (Ecu)
*Sent off: Rodolfo (Gremio) 85min*

**LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 2 – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| At Junior | 6 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 7 | 13 |
| Gremio | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 9 | 6 | 10 |
| Oriente | 6 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 7 | 8 | 6 |
| Leon | 6 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 8 | 5 |

Group 3

*Apr 6*
**America (Mex) 2** (Vuoso 73, Marquez 82)
**Argentinos Juniors (Arg) 1** (Niell 49)
**HT:** 0-0. **Ref:** Amarilla (Par)

*Apr 6*
**Nacional (Uru) 2** (Garcia 50, 67)
**Fluminense (Bra) 0**
**HT:** 0-0. **Ref:** Ruiz (Col)
*Sent off: Gallardo (Nacional) 85min*

*Apr 20*
**Argentinos Juniors 2** (Salcedo pen 26, Oberman 54)
**Fluminense 4** (Julio Cesar 18, Fred 40, pen 89, Rafael Moura 68)
**HT:** 1-2. **Ref:** Roldan (Col)

*Apr 20*
**Nacional 0**
**America 0**
**Ref:** Carrillo (Per)

**LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 3 – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| America | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 8 | 7 | 10 |
| Fluminense | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 9 | 9 | 8 |
| Nacional | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 8 |
| Argentinos | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 9 | 10 | 7 |

Group 4

*Apr 6*
**Union Espanola (Chl) 1** (Jaime 3)
**Caracas (Ven) 2** (Pena 34, Martinez 83)
**HT:** 1-1. **Ref:** Vuaden (Bra)

*Apr 7*
**Universidad Catolica (Chl) 0**
**Velez Sarsfield (Arg) 0**
**Ref:** Larrionda (Uru)
*Sent off: Fernandez (Velez) 66min*

*Apr 14*
**Caracas 0**
**Velez Sarsfield 3** (Moralez 21, Silva 47, 55)
**HT:** 0-1. **Ref:** Buitrago (Col)
*Sent off: Diaz (Velez) 85min*

*Apr 14*
**Universidad Catolica 2** (Calandria 49, Canete 78)
**Union Espanola 1** (Harbottle 47)
**HT:** 0-0. **Ref:** Osorio (Chl)

**LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 4 – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Univ Catolica | 6 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 11 | 9 | 11 |
| Velez | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 12 | 7 | 10 |
| Caracas | 6 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 7 | 10 | 9 |
| Espanola | 6 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 7 | 11 | 4 |

Group 5

*Apr 6*
**Santos (Bra) 3** (Elano 34, Danilo 36, Neymar 52)
**Colo Colo (Chl) 2** (Jerez 82, Rubio 87)
**HT:** 2-0. **Ref:** Silvera (Uru)
*Sent off: Neymar 52min, Ze Eduardo 56min, Elano 90min (all Santos); Scotti 56min, Jorquera 90min (both Colo Colo)*

*Apr 6*
**Deportivo Tachira (Ven) 0**
**Cerro Porteno (Par) 2** (Nanni 20, Torres 65)
**HT:** 0-1. **Ref:** Pezzotta (Arg)

*Apr 12*
**Colo Colo 2** (Rubio 7, 24)
**Deportivo Tachira 1** (Perez 4)
**HT:** 2-1. **Ref:** Baldassi (Arg)

*Apr 14*
**Cerro Porteno 1** (Benitez 90+4)
**Santos 2** (Danilo 12, Maikon Leite 48)
**HT:** 0-1. **Ref:** Vazquez (Uru)

*Apr 20*
**Colo Colo 2** (Jorquera 4, Paredes 21)
**Cerro Porteno 3** (Fabbro 43, 88, Piris 48)
**HT:** 2-1. **Ref:** Larrionda (Uru)

*Apr 20*
**Santos 3** (Neymar 4, Jonathan 13, Danilo 72)
**Deportivo Tachira 1** (Chacon 69)
**HT:** 2-0. **Ref:** Pittana (Arg)

**LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 5 – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cerro Porteno | 6 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 13 | 8 | 11 |
| Santos | 6 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 11 | 8 | 11 |
| Colo Colo | 6 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 15 | 16 | 9 |
| Dep Tachira | 6 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 12 | 2 |

Group 6

*Mar 30*
**Internacional (Bra) 3** (Oscar 18, D'Alessandro 58, Ze Roberto 72)
**Jorge Wilstermann (Bol) 0**
**HT:** 1-0. **Ref:** Ubriaco (Uru)
*Sent off: L Fernandez (Wilstermann) 69min*

*Apr 6*
**Jaguares (Mex) 1** (Salazar 55)
**Internacional 0**
**HT:** 0-0. **Ref:** Roldan (Col)

*Apr 7*
**Jorge Wilstermann 0**
**Emelec (Ecu) 0**
**Ref:** Escalante (Ven)

*Apr 19*
**Internacional 2** (Rafael Sobis 52, Leandro Damiao 84)
**Emelec 0**
**HT:** 0-0. **Ref:** Pezzotta (Arg)

*Apr 19*
**Jorge Wilstermann 2** (Fabio Mineiro 76, Torres 82)
**Jaguares 1** (Frias 7)
**HT:** 0-1. **Ref:** Quintana (Par)
*Sent off: Frias (Jaguares) 50min*

**LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 6 – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Internacional | 6 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 14 | 3 | 13 |
| Jaguares | 6 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 6 | 8 | 9 |
| Emelec | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 8 |
| Wilstermann | 6 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 11 | 4 |

Group 7

*Mar 30*
**Guarani (Par) 0**
**Cruzeiro (Bra) 2** (Thiago Ribeiro 17, Ortigoza 90+2)
**HT:** 0-1. **Ref:** Osses (Chl)

*Mar 30*
**Deportes Tolima (Col) 1** (Noguera pen 31)
**Estudiantes de La Plata (Arg) 1** (F Fernandez 23)
**HT:** 1-1. **Ref:** Rivera (Per)

*Apr 13*
**Estudiantes de La Plata 0**
**Cruzeiro 3** (Thiago Ribeiro 11, Wallyson 45+1, Gilberto 82)
**HT:** 0-2. **Ref:** Silvera (Uru)

*Apr 13*
**Guarani 0**
**Deportes Tolima 2** (Santoya 49, Closa 69)
**HT:** 0-0. **Ref:** Antequera (Bol)

**LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 7 – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cruzeiro | 6 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 20 | 1 | 16 |
| Estudiantes | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 9 | 11 | 10 |
| Tolima | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 8 | 8 |
| Guarani | 6 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 2 | 16 | 0 |

Group 8

*Mar 31*
**Penarol (Uru) 2** (Olivera 42, Freitas 71)
**Godoy Cruz (Arg) 1** (D Rodriguez og 57)
**HT:** 1-0. **Ref:** Lopes (Bra)

*Apr 5*
**Independiente (Arg) 1** (Nunez pen 24)
**LDU Quito (Ecu) 1** (Barcos 58)
**HT:** 1-0. **Ref:** Torres (Par)

*Apr 12*
**LDU Quito 2** (L Bolanos 48, Barcos 59)
**Godoy Cruz 0**
**HT:** 0-0. **Ref:** De Oliveira (Bra)
*Sent off: Sanchez (Godoy Cruz) 62min*

*Apr 12*
**Penarol 0**
**Independiente 1** (Parra 34)
**HT:** 0-1. **Ref:** Arias (Par)
*Sent off: Olivera (Penarol) 84min; Assmann (Independiente) 84min*

**LIBERTADORES CUP – GROUP 8 – FINAL**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| LDU Quito | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 12 | 4 | 10 |
| Penarol | 6 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 6 | 11 | 9 |
| Independiente | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 8 | 8 |
| Godoy Cruz | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 8 | 10 | 7 |

*Top 2 in each group qualified for 1st knockout round*

## ARGENTINA

### Clausura

Friday, March 25
**Argentinos Juniors 0**
**Quilmes 0**

**Estudiantes 3** (Roncaglia 19, Vella og 23, Gonzalez 53)
**All Boys 0**

Saturday, March 26
**Huracan 2** (Battaglia 8, Campora 18)
**Gimnasia La Plata 0**

**Lanus 4** (Regueiro 59, Carranza 69, Izquierdoz 84, Pizarro 90+3)
**Racing Club 1** (Toranzo 28)

**Olimpo 0**
**San Lorenzo 1** (Salgueiro 74)

**River Plate 2** (Caruso 35, 72)
**Newell's Old Boys 1** (Sperdutti 41)

Sunday, March 27
**Colon 0**
**Boca Juniors 1** (Riquelme 61)

**Independiente 1** (Tuzzio 8)
**Banfield 1** (Garcia 43)

**Tigre 2** (Stracqualursi 62, 90+2)
**Godoy Cruz 2** (Donda 28, Navarro 45)

**Velez Sarsfield 3** (Silva pen 25, Alvarez 36, Martinez 63)
**Arsenal 0**

Friday, April 1
**Banfield 0**
**Argentinos Juniors 2** (Niell 32, Bogado 79)

**Gimnasia La Plata 1** (Masuero 19)
**Independiente 2** (Silvera 55, Pellerano 90+2)

Saturday, April 2
**All Boys 0**
**Lanus 0**

**Newell's Old Boys 2** (Cobelli 47, Almiron 54)
**Arsenal 2** (Leguizamon 27, Obolo 30)

**Olimpo 1** (Rolle pen 40)
**Velez Sarsfield 2** (Alvarez 2, Papa 52)

**Racing Club 1** (Yacob 77)
**Tigre 2** (Pernia 24, Stracqualursi 51)

Sunday, April 3
**Boca Juniors 2** (Riquelme 15, Viatri 90)
**Estudiantes 1** (Lopez 7)

**Godoy Cruz 3** (Navarro 4, 16, Salinas pen 39)
**Huracan 1** (Campora 7)

**Quilmes 0**
**River Plate 1** (Ferrari 14)

**San Lorenzo 1** (Carmona 90+1)
**Colon 2** (Acosta 20, 36)

Friday, April 8
**Estudiantes 0**
**San Lorenzo 0**

USA

### Timbers' historic win

Portland Timbers moved off the bottom of the Eastern Conference table after sealing their first-ever victory in MLS.

The league newcomers beat Chicago Fire 4-2 with two goals from Jorge Perlaza, and one each from Rodney Wallace and Mamadou Danso.

Moving on up...Portland Timbers celebrate their first MLS victory

TUNISIA

### Empty stadiums

The remaining games in this season's championship are to be played behind closed doors after violent clashes forced two matches to be abandoned.

Olympique Beja v AS Marsa and CA Bizertin v CS Sfaxien were called off when home fans at both matches invaded the pitch after the visitors had scored. At the game in Bizerte, the stadium was damaged and TV cameras attacked. The rearranged games were then cancelled after refs went on strike, calling for greater security at grounds.

There are 10 rounds remaining in the Tunisian league, which was suspended earlier in the campaign due to the country's political revolution.

**Independiente 3** (Perez 55, Fredes 66, Nunez 86)
**Godoy Cruz 0**

Saturday, April 9
**Arsenal 2** (Lopez 73, Leguizamon 90+1)
**Quilmes 2** (Vazquez 27, Garnier 83)

**Colon 0**
**Olimpo 2** (Bareiro 17, Litre 68)

**Huracan 0**
**Racing Club 0**

**River Plate 1** (Pavone 69)
**Banfield 0**

Sunday, April 10
**Argentinos Juniors 1** (Rius 30)
**Gimnasia La Plata 1** (Vizcarra 25)

**Lanus 2** (Valeri 80, Hoyos 86)
**Boca Juniors 0**

**Tigre 0**
**All Boys 1** (Barrientos 9)

**Velez Sarsfield 2** (Silva 8, Fernandez 78)
**Newell's Old Boys 0**

Friday, April 15
**Quilmes 3** (Romeo 23, 85, Cauteruccio 62)
**Newell's Old Boys 1** (Sperdutti 27)

Saturday, April 16
**All Boys 3** (Fabbiani 13, 20, Gigliotti pen 52)
**Huracan 1** (Campora 21)

**Godoy Cruz 1** (Villar 2)
**Argentinos Juniors 0**

**Racing Club 2** (Hauche 44, Gutierrez 86)
**Independiente 0**

**San Lorenzo 1** (Menseguez 53)
**Lanus 1** (Goltz 69)

Sunday, April 17
**Boca Juniors 3** (Colazo 43, Riquelme 45, Rodriguez 78)
**Tigre 3** (Stracqualursi 22, 36, pen 70)

**Colon 1** (Moreno y Fabianesi 67)
**Velez Sarsfield 1** (Zapata 90+4)

**Gimnasia La Plata 0**
**River Plate 0**

**Olimpo 2** (Galvan pen 31, Bareiro 64)
**Estudiantes 2** (Mosset og 55, Fernandez 59)

Monday, April 18
**Banfield 1** (Ferreyra 64)
**Arsenal 0**

Wednesday, April 20
**Velez Sarsfield 2** (Silva 78, Fernandez 90+1)
**San Lorenzo 0**

Saturday, April 23
**Estudiantes 0**
**Colon 2** (Fuertes 41, Diaz 90+4)

**Independiente 2** (Parra 41, Battion 56)
**All Boys 2** (Ereros 78, Gigliotti 82)

**Newell's Old Boys 0**
**Banfield 1** (Achucarro 58)

**River Plate 1** (Maidana 38)
**Godoy Cruz 2** (Garcia 49, Donda 85)

**Velez Sarsfield 2** (Canteros 39, Vuletich 90+2)
**Quilmes 3** (Caneo 65, Vazquez 81, 82)

Sunday, April 24
**Argentinos Juniors 2** (Salcedo 59, Prosperi 78)
**Racing Club 1** (Gutierrez 18)

**Arsenal 1** (Obolo 33)
**Gimnasia La Plata 1** (Barros Schelotto 67)

**Huracan 0**
**Boca Juniors 3** (Chavez 19, Colazo 46, Palermo 83)

**Tigre 1** (Ferrari og 5)
**San Lorenzo 0**

Monday, April 25
**Lanus 1** (Romero 78)
**Olimpo 1** (Cobo 90)

**ARGENTINA – CLAUSURA**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Velez | 11 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 19 | 11 | 21 |
| Godoy Cruz | 11 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 20 | 16 | 20 |
| River Plate | 11 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 10 | 6 | 19 |
| Olimpo | 11 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 20 | 15 | 18 |
| Argentinos | 11 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 10 | 5 | 18 |
| Banfield | 11 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 12 | 11 | 18 |
| Estudiantes | 11 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 12 | 9 | 17 |
| Colon | 11 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 14 | 15 | 17 |
| Lanus | 11 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 15 | 11 | 16 |
| Racing Club | 11 | 5 | 1 | 5 | 16 | 14 | 16 |
| San Lorenzo | 11 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 11 | 9 | 15 |
| Tigre | 11 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| Independiente | 11 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 15 | 13 | 14 |
| Boca Juniors | 11 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 11 | 14 | 14 |
| All Boys | 11 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 14 | 12 |
| Arsenal | 11 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 13 | 15 | 11 |
| Gimnasia LP | 11 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 10 | 14 | 11 |
| Huracan | 11 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 13 | 19 | 11 |
| Quilmes | 11 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 12 | 16 | 9 |
| Newell's | 11 | 1 | 2 | 8 | 10 | 23 | 5 |

19-round tournament (19x1); the 2 teams with the worst average points over the 3 most recent seasons will be relegated; the teams with 3rd and 4th worst averages enter rel/prom play-offs

**LEADING GOALSCORERS**
8 Denis Stracqualursi (Tigre)
7 Javier Campora (Huracan)
7 Teofilo Gutierrez (Racing Club)

## CHILE

### Apertura

Regular season

Mar 27: O'Higgins 1 Palestino 2; Colo Colo 1 Huachipato 2.
Mar 31: Espanola 3 La Calera 1.
Apr 2: San Felipe 1 Univ Catolica 2; Univ Concepcion 0 O'Higgins 1; La Serena 0 Iquique 0.
Apr 3: Morning 1 Huachipato 1; Cobresal 1 Nublense 2; Cobreloa 1 Palestino 0; Audax Italiano 2 Colo Colo 1; Univ Chile 4 Wanderers 1.
Apr 8: Wanderers 1 San Felipe 2.
Apr 9: Palestino 1 La Calera 1; Huachipato 1 Audax Italiano 1; Iquique 2 Univ Chile 2; Colo Colo 4 La Serena 1.
Apr 10: Nublense 1 Morning 1; O'Higgins 0 Espanola 0; Cobresal 4 Univ Concepcion 3; Univ Catolica 2 Cobreloa 0.
Apr 16: San Felipe 3 Morning 1.
Apr 16: La Calera 0 Univ Chile 2; Audax Italiano 1 O'Higgins 3; Palestino 1 Iquique 0; Univ Concepcion 1 Nublense 0.
Apr 17: Colo Colo 1 Univ Catolica 1; Cobreloa 1 Cobresal 0; La Serena 3 Wanderers 1; Espanola 4 Huachipato 2.
Apr 21: Nublense 0 Espanola 5.
Apr 23: O'Higgins 2 La Calera 0; Wanderers 2 Univ Concepcion 1; Huachipato 1 Cobreloa 1; Univ Chile 0 Palestino 0; Univ Catolica 5 Cobresal 2; Iquique 2 Audax Italiano 0.
Apr 24: San Felipe 0 La Serena 1; Morning 0 Colo Colo 1.

**CHILE – APERTURA: REGULAR**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Univ Catolica | 13 | 10 | 2 | 1 | 28 | 13 | 32 |
| O'Higgins | 13 | 8 | 2 | 3 | 26 | 17 | 26 |
| Univ Chile | 13 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 30 | 15 | 25 |
| Espanola | 13 | 7 | 3 | 3 | 26 | 13 | 24 |
| San Felipe | 13 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 18 | 13 | 20 |
| La Calera | 13 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 15 | 16 | 20 |
| Huachipato | 13 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 21 | 22 | 18 |
| Palestino | 13 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 17 | 18 | 18 |
| Wanderers | 13 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 22 | 23 | 17 |
| Colo Colo | 13 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 18 | 20 | 17 |
| Audax Italiano | 13 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 18 | 24 | 17 |
| La Serena | 13 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 18 | 18 | 16 |
| Cobreloa | 13 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 11 | 15 | 15 |
| Cobresal | 13 | 5 | 0 | 8 | 22 | 32 | 15 |
| U Concepcion | 13 | 4 | 1 | 8 | 17 | 21 | 13 |
| Iquique | 13 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 14 | 20 | 13 |
| Morning | 13 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 16 | 22 | 12 |
| Nublense | 13 | 3 | 1 | 9 | 13 | 28 | 10 |

17-round regular season (17x1); top 8 will enter championship play-offs; no relegation after apertura

## COLOMBIA

### Apertura

Regular season

Mar 26: Itagui 2 Indep Santa Fe 2; Dep Cali 0 Tolima 2; Junior 1 America 1.
Mar 27: Millonarios 3 Cartagena 0; Indep Medellin 2 Pereira 2; Chico 2 Quindio 1; Cucuta 1 Envigado 1; Huila 1 La Equidad 1; Once Caldas 3 Nacional 1.
Apr 2: America 2 Dep Cali 3; Junior 2 Cartagena 0; Indep Medellin 2 Nacional 3.
Apr 3: Indep Santa Fe 0 Millonarios 2; La Equidad 2 Chico 0; Itagui 1 Envigado 1; Pereira 1 Once Caldas 0; Cucuta 2 Quindio 0; Huila 4 Tolima 7.
Apr 6: La Equidad 1 Cucuta 1; Nacional 1 Indep Medellin 0; America 2 Huila 1; Pereira 0 Chico 1; Cartagena 2 Itagui 0; Envigado 2 Once Caldas 1; Tolima 1 Millonarios 0.
Apr 9: Millonarios 5 Quindio 0; Chico 2 Nacional 1; Dep Cali 2 Pereira 1; Cartagena 2 Tolima 1.
Apr 10: Indep Medellin 1 Envigado 2; Itagui 3 Junior 0; Huila 2 Indep Santa Fe 0; Once Caldas 0 La Equidad 1; Cucuta 0 America 0.
Apr 16: La Equidad 5 Indep Medellin 0.
Apr 16: Indep Santa Fe 3 Cucuta 1; America 2 Once Caldas 1.
Apr 17: Nacional 2 Dep Cali 1; Tolima 0 Itagui 0; Quindio 2 Cartagena 1; Pereira 1 Millonarios 2; Envigado 2 Chico 1; Junior 3 Huila 0.
Apr 20: Quindio 0 Dep Cali 1; Indep Santa Fe 2 Junior 0.
Apr 23: Indep Medellin 1 America 0; Cucuta 0 Junior 0; Dep Cali 3 Envigado 2.
Apr 24: Millonarios 1 Nacional 2; Cartagena 2 Pereira 2; Itagui 3 Huila 3; Chico 1 La Equidad 2; Tolima 0 Quindio 0; Once Caldas 2 Indep Santa Fe 2.

**COLOMBIA – APERTURA: REGULAR**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nacional | 13 | 8 | 2 | 3 | 26 | 16 | 26 |
| La Equidad | 13 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 19 | 7 | 25 |
| Once Caldas | 13 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 25 | 14 | 23 |
| Millonarios | 13 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 24 | 14 | 23 |
| Tolima | 13 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 23 | 17 | 23 |
| Envigado | 13 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 22 | 17 | 23 |
| Itagui | 13 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 19 | 16 | 20 |
| Cucuta | 13 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 15 | 14 | 17 |
| America | 13 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 15 | 17 | 17 |
| Dep Cali | 13 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 13 | 18 | 17 |
| Quindio | 13 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 11 | 19 | 17 |
| Chico | 13 | 5 | 1 | 7 | 16 | 18 | 16 |
| Cartagena | 13 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 17 | 23 | 15 |
| Junior | 13 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 14 | 21 | 15 |
| Ind Medellin | 13 | 4 | 2 | 7 | 17 | 23 | 14 |
| Ind Santa Fe | 13 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 12 | 17 | 13 |
| Huila | 13 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 20 | 26 | 13 |
| Pereira | 13 | 1 | 4 | 8 | 11 | 22 | 7 |

18-round regular season (17x1, plus 1 round of "clasicos"); top 8 enter championship play-offs; no relegation after apertura

## ECUADOR

### 1st stage

Mar 27: Emelec 2 Manta 1.
Apr 2: El Nacional 3 Espoli 0; Imbabura 3 Olmedo 1; Independiente 2 Barcelona 3; Manta 2 LDU Loja 0.
Apr 3: Emelec 0 Cuenca 0.
Apr 9: Dep Quito 0 LDU Quito 0; LDU Loja 3 Manta 0.
Apr 10: Olmedo 2 Imbabura 0; Espoli 1 El Nacional 1; Barcelona 1 Independiente 1.
Apr 12: Cuenca 0 Emelec 1.
Apr 15: Independiente 0 Emelec 3.
Apr 16: Imbabura 3 Dep Quito 2; Barcelona 4 Olmedo 0; Manta 0 Espoli 1.
Apr 17: LDU Quito 1 LDU Loja 1; El Nacional 4 Cuenca 2.
Apr 20: LDU Quito 1 Cuenca 0.
Apr 23: LDU Loja 0 Imbabura 2; Espoli 0 LDU Quito 0.
Apr 24: Dep Quito 1 Barcelona 0; Cuenca 3 Manta 2; Olmedo 2 Independiente 2; Emelec 1 El Nacional 1.

**ECUADOR – 1ST STAGE**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| LDU Quito | 13 | 8 | 4 | 1 | 21 | 6 | 28 |
| Emelec | 13 | 8 | 4 | 1 | 19 | 9 | 28 |
| Dep Quito | 13 | 8 | 3 | 2 | 25 | 12 | 27 |
| El Nacional | 14 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 21 | 14 | 22 |
| Cuenca | 15 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 16 | 17 | 21 |
| Barcelona | 14 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 15 | 15 | 18 |
| Olmedo | 14 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 15 | 22 | 18 |
| LDU Loja | 14 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 14 | 17 | 15 |
| Manta | 14 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 12 | 18 | 15 |
| Imbabura | 14 | 4 | 2 | 8 | 17 | 22 | 14 |
| Espoli | 14 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 12 | 22 | 10 |
| Independiente | 14 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 15 | 28 | 10 |

22-round tournament (11x2); no relegation after 1st stage

## PARAGUAY

### Apertura

Mar 26: Nacional 2 Cerro Porteno 0; Independiente 2 Libertad 0.
Mar 27: Caballero 1 Rubio Nu 5; Luqueno 1 Guarani 0; Sol de America 0 Tacuary 0; Olimpia 3 3 de Febrero 1.
Mar 30: Cerro Porteno 1 Libertad 2.
Apr 2: Caballero 0 Libertad 1; Guarani 1 Cerro Porteno 0.
Apr 3: Luqueno 2 Tacuary 2; Independiente 0 3 de Febrero 1; Sol de America 3 Rubio Nu 4; Olimpia 1 Nacional 2.
Apr 6: Libertad 0 Guarani 0.
Apr 9: Nacional 2 Guarani 1; Libertad 1 Sol de America 2; Olimpia 1 Independiente 1.

Kuwaiti champions...Qadsia

CHINA

### New boys surprise

Promoted Guangzhou and Chengdu Blades produced shock results as the Super League kicked off.

Brazilian striker Cleo, who became the league's most expensive import when he was signed from Partizan Belgrade in February, scored the only goal in Guangzhou's 1-0 win over eight-time national champions Dalian Shide, while Chengdu Blades held defending champions Shandong Luneng to a 3-3 draw with goals from Australian strike duo Brendon Santalab (two) and Adam Kwasnik.

Real Madrid will play friendlies against Guangzhou on August 3 and Tianjin Teda three days later.

JORDAN

### Title tied up early

Al Wehdat claimed the league championship for a 12th time with a 2-0 victory over Al Ramtha.

KUWAIT

### Final-day showdown

Qadsia beat Kuwait SC 2-0 to win their 14th league crown as the top two met on the season's last day. Al Qadsia, who led by a point going into the game, won with goals from Fahad Al Ansari and Firas Al Khatib.

QATAR

### Debut success

Lekhwiya, in their first season in the Qatar Stars League, ended the campaign as champions. They beat Umm Salal 3-0



Apr 10: 3 de Febrero 1 Caballero 0; Rubio Nu 2 Luqueno 1; Tacuary 2 Cerro Porteno 0.
Apr 13: Libertad 0 Nacional 1.
Apr 16: Luqueno 1 Libertad 0; Guarani 1 Tacuary 2.
Apr 17: Independiente 5 Nacional 1; Sol de America 3 3 de Febrero 2; Caballero 1 Olimpia 2; Cerro Porteno 1 Rubio Nu 1.
Apr 20: Guarani 2 Independiente 0.
Apr 23: Nacional 1 Tacuary 0; Rubio Nu 3 Guarani 0; 3 de Febrero 1 Luqueno 0; Olimpia 2 Sol de America 0.
Apr 24: Libertad 1 Cerro Porteno 1; Independiente 2 Caballero 2.

**PARAGUAY – APERTURA**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Olimpia | 15 | 10 | 3 | 2 | 33 | 14 | 33 |
| Nacional | 15 | 10 | 3 | 2 | 21 | 12 | 33 |
| Rubio Nu | 15 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 28 | 20 | 26 |
| Libertad | 15 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 17 | 14 | 22 |
| Tacuary | 15 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 13 | 10 | 22 |
| Guarani | 14 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 16 | 15 | 21 |
| Independiente | 15 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 19 | 20 | 17 |
| Cerro Porteno | 14 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 16 | 19 | 17 |
| 3 de Febrero | 15 | 4 | 3 | 8 | 14 | 20 | 15 |
| Luqueno | 15 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 15 | 23 | 14 |
| Sol America | 15 | 3 | 3 | 9 | 15 | 27 | 12 |
| Caballero | 15 | 2 | 4 | 9 | 13 | 26 | 10 |

22-round tournament (11x2); no relegation after apertura

## URUGUAY

### Clausura

Mar 29: Nacional 5 El Tanque Sisley 2.
Apr 2: Miramar Misiones 0 Fenix 1; River Plate 3 Cerro 4; Defensor 1 Danubio 1; Nacional 3 Racing 0.
Apr 3: Central Espanol 5 Rampla 1; Penarol 5 Tacuarembo 0; Bella Vista 2 Liverpool 4; Wanderers 5 El Tanque Sisley 1.
Apr 9: Danubio 0 Penarol 1; Cerro 1 Miramar Misiones 1; Fenix 2 Wanderers 2.
Apr 10: El Tanque Sisley 0 Bella Vista 0; Rampla 0 Defensor 0; Liverpool 1 River Plate 1; Tacuarembo 0 Nacional 3; Racing 1 Central Espanol 1.
Apr 16: Bella Vista 1 Racing 0; Wanderers 2 Central Espanol 2; Miramar Misiones 1 Rampla 2; River Plate 4 Nacional 2.
Apr 17: El Tanque Sisley 3 Danubio 2; Liverpool 2 Penarol 4; Cerro 2 Tacuarembo 2; Fenix 0 Defensor 1.
Apr 23: Rampla 1 Penarol 3; Liverpool 1 El Tanque Sisley 0; Bella Vista 0 Wanderers 1.
Apr 24: River Plate 2 Miramar Misiones 1; Danubio 3 Tacuarembo 1; Cerro 1 Fenix 1; Defensor 3 Racing 0; Nacional 3 Central Espanol 1.

**URUGUAY – CLAUSURA**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nacional | 11 | 8 | 1 | 2 | 27 | 11 | 25 |
| Penarol | 10 | 8 | 1 | 1 | 24 | 11 | 25 |
| Defensor | 11 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 17 | 6 | 24 |
| Fenix | 11 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 16 | 12 | 19 |
| C Espanol | 11 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 20 | 13 | 16 |
| Liverpool | 11 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 18 | 17 | 15 |
| Rampla | 11 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 14 | 21 | 15 |
| Danubio | 11 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 17 | 18 | 14 |
| Wanderers | 11 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 17 | 13 | 13 |
| Cerro | 11 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 14 | 21 | 13 |
| Tacuarembo | 11 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 12 | 21 | 13 |
| Bella Vista | 11 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 12 | 13 | 12 |
| Racing | 11 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 13 | 18 | 12 |
| River Plate | 10 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 17 | 23 | 10 |
| M Misiones | 11 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 11 | 18 | 8 |
| Tanque Sisley | 11 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 12 | 25 | 7 |

15-round tournament (15x1); the 3 teams with fewest points in combined apertura/clausura table will be relegated

# CONCACAF

## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

### Semi-finals

*1st legs - March 15/16; 2nd legs - April 5/6*
Monterrey (Mex) v Cruz Azul (Mex)
2-1, 1-1 (agg 3-2)
Real Salt Lake (USA) v Saprissa (CR)
2-0, 1-2 (agg 3-2)

## MEXICO

### Clausura

Regular season

Apr 1: Necaxa 1 Guadalajara 2.
Apr 2: Jaguares 3 Pumas 1; Queretaro 3 San Luis 2; Tigres 2 Atlante 0; Santos 3 Cruz Azul 0; Atlas 1 Tecos 1.
Apr 3: Toluca 1 Monterrey 1; Morelia 1 Pachuca 3; America 5 Puebla 4.
Apr 8: Tecos 0 Queretaro 0.
Apr 9: Cruz Azul 2 Morelia 3; Monterrey 1 Santos 1; Pachuca 3 Jaguares 0; San Luis 0 Necaxa 0; Atlante 3 Atlas 1.
Apr 10: Puebla 1 Toluca 1; Pumas 2 Tigres 0; Guadalajara 3 America 0.
Apr 12: Morelia 2 Jaguares 1.
Apr 13: Toluca 1 Guadalajara 2; Necaxa 2 Tecos 2; Santos 4 Puebla 0; Queretaro 1 Atlante 4; Cruz Azul 3 Monterrey 0; Atlas 0 Pumas 0; Tigres 4 Pachuca 2.
Apr 16: Jaguares 0 Tigres 1; Monterrey 1 Morelia 1; Guadalajara 0 Santos 1; Pachuca 1 Atlas 2; Atlante 1 Necaxa 1; Puebla 2 Cruz Azul 0; San Luis 1 Toluca 2.
Apr 17: Pumas 3 Queretaro 0; Tecos 1 America 3.
Apr 22: Necaxa 0 Pumas 1.
Apr 23: Cruz Azul 1 Guadalajara 1; Queretaro 1 Pachuca 1; Monterrey 1 Puebla 1; Santos 1 San Luis 3; Atlas 2 Jaguares 0.
Apr 24: Morelia 0 Tigres 3; Toluca 4 Tecos 4; America 1 Atlante 1.

**MEXICO – CLAUSURA: REGULAR – GROUP 1**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tigres | 16 | 9 | 5 | 2 | 23 | 9 | 32 |
| Guadalajara | 16 | 6 | 7 | 3 | 21 | 12 | 25 |
| Monterrey | 16 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 20 | 18 | 23 |
| Santos | 16 | 6 | 2 | 8 | 20 | 22 | 20 |
| Tecos | 16 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 20 | 31 | 17 |
| Necaxa | 16 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 9 | 14 | 14 |

**MEXICO – CLAUSURA: REGULAR – GROUP 2**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Atlante | 16 | 7 | 3 | 6 | 26 | 16 | 24 |
| Atlas | 16 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 19 | 16 | 23 |
| America | 16 | 7 | 2 | 7 | 29 | 28 | 23 |
| Toluca | 16 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 27 | 25 | 21 |
| San Luis | 16 | 4 | 8 | 4 | 20 | 18 | 20 |
| Pachuca | 16 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 15 | 24 | 17 |

**MEXICO – CLAUSURA: REGULAR – GROUP 3**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pumas | 16 | 10 | 5 | 1 | 27 | 11 | 35 |
| Morelia | 16 | 8 | 4 | 4 | 29 | 24 | 28 |
| Cruz Azul | 16 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 25 | 20 | 25 |
| Puebla | 16 | 5 | 3 | 8 | 16 | 24 | 18 |
| Queretaro | 16 | 4 | 4 | 8 | 15 | 31 | 16 |
| Jaguares | 16 | 3 | 2 | 11 | 11 | 29 | 11 |

17-round regular season (17x1); top 2 in each group and the 2 other teams with most points, regardless of group, will enter championship play-offs; the team with worst average points over the 3 most recent seasons will be relegated

## UNITED STATES

Regular season

Mar 25: Seattle 1 Houston 1.
Mar 26: Toronto 2 Portland 0; Chicago 3 Kansas City 2; Philadelphia 1 Vancouver 0; Columbus 0 New York 0; New England 2 DC United 1; Dallas 0 San Jose 2; Salt Lake 4 Los Angeles 1; Chivas 0 Colorado 1.
Apr 1: Columbus 2 Dallas 0.
Apr 2: Toronto 1 Chivas 1; Vancouver 3 Kansas City 3; New York 1 Houston 1; New England 1 Portland 1; San Jose 2 Seattle 2; Los Angeles 1 Philadelphia 0.
Apr 3: Colorado 4 DC United 1.
Apr 6: Vancouver 1 New England 1.
Apr 8: Dallas 3 Colorado 0.
Apr 9: Seattle 2 Chicago 1; Philadelphia 1 New York 0; New England 0 Salt Lake 2; DC United 1 Los Angeles 1; Chivas 0 Columbus 0; San Jose 1 Toronto 1.
Apr 10: Houston 3 Vancouver 1.
Apr 13: Toronto 0 Los Angeles 0; Salt Lake 1 Colorado 0.
Apr 14: Portland 4 Chicago 2.
Apr 16: Philadelphia 1 Seattle 1; Toronto 0 DC United 3; Vancouver 0 Chivas 0; Columbus 1 Kansas City 0; New York 3 San Jose 0.
Apr 17: Chicago 1 Los Angeles 2; Portland 3 Dallas 2; Houston 1 New England 0.
Apr 21: DC United 0 New York 4.
Apr 22: Colorado 0 Seattle 1.
Apr 23: Toronto 1 Columbus 1; San Jose 1 Chivas 2; Vancouver 1 Dallas 2; New England 3 Kansas City 2; Chicago 1 Houston 1; Los Angeles 3 Portland 0.

**USA – REGULAR – EASTERN CONFERENCE**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| New York | 6 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 2 | 11 |
| Philadelphia | 5 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 10 |
| Houston | 6 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 7 | 5 | 9 |
| Columbus | 6 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 9 |
| New England | 7 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 8 | 9 | 9 |
| DC United | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 9 | 12 | 7 |
| Toronto | 7 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 7 | 10 | 7 |
| Chicago | 6 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 9 | 12 | 5 |
| Kansas City | 5 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 10 | 12 | 4 |

**USA – REGULAR – WESTERN CONFERENCE**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Los Angeles | 8 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 10 | 7 | 15 |
| Salt Lake | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 1 | 12 |
| Colorado | 6 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 8 | 7 | 9 |
| Seattle | 7 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 7 | 9 |
| Dallas | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 8 | 9 | 7 |
| Portland | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 9 | 13 | 7 |
| Chivas | 6 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 6 |
| Vancouver | 7 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 10 | 12 | 6 |
| San Jose | 6 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 9 | 5 |

34-round regular season (17x2); top 3 in each conference will enter championship play-offs automatically; the other 4 teams with most points, regardless of conference, will meet in 2 head-to-head ties, the winners of which will also enter championship play-offs; no relegation from this league

# AFRICA

## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

### 1st round

*1st legs - March 18-20; 2nd legs - April 1-4*
Al Ahly (Egy) v SuperSport United (SAf) 2-0, 0-1 (agg 2-1); Al Hilal (Sud) v Recreativo Caala (Ang) 3-0, 1-1 (agg 4-1); Al Ittihad (Lby) v JC Abidjan (IvC) – *JC Abidjan withdrew, Al Ittihad went through;* Al Merreikh (Sud) v InterClube (Ang) 2-0, 0-2 (agg 2-2, InterClube 3-2 on pens); AS Vita (DRC) v Cotonsport (Cam) 0-1, 0-2 (agg 0-3); Club Africain (Tun) v Zamalek (Egy) 4-2, 1-2 (agg 5-4); Diaraf (Sen) v Djoliba (Mli) 3-0, 1-1 (agg 4-1); Dynamos (Zim) v Mouloudia (Alg) 4-1, 0-3 (agg 4-4, Mouloudia on away goals); ES Setif (Alg) v ASFA Yennenga (BuF) 2-0, 4-3 (agg 6-3); Esperance (Tun) v ASPAC (Ben) 5-0, 0-2 (agg 5-2); Motor Action (Zim) v ASEC Abidjan (IvC)* 0-0 (ASEC 4-2 on pens); Stade Malien (Mli) v Raja Casablanca (Mor) 2-1, 0-1 (agg 2-2, Raja on away goals); TP Mazembe (DRC) v Simba SC (Tan) 3-1, 3-2 (agg 6-3); US Bitam (Gab) v Enyimba (Nga) 0-0, 1-2 (agg 1-2); Wydad Casablanca (Mor) v Kano Pillars (Nga) 2-0, 0-0 (agg 2-0); Zesco United (Zam) v Young Buffaloes (Swa) 5-0, 2-0 (agg 7-0).
**Single leg only, played in Zimbabwe, because of civil unrest in Ivory Coast*

## CONFEDERATION CUP

### 1st round

*1st legs - March 18-21; 2nd legs - April 2/3*
Africa Sports (IvC) v USFA (BuF) – *Africa Sports withdrew, USFA went through;* Al Khartoum (Sud) v Al Nasr (Lby) – *Al Nasr withdrew, Al Khartoum went through;* Al Nil (Sud) v Missile (Gab) 1-1, 1-2 (agg 2-3); Etoile Sahel (Tun) v Ashanti Gold (Gha) 3-0, 1-2 (agg 4-2); FUS Rabat (Mor) v Toure Kunda Footpro (Sen) 2-0, 1-2 (agg 3-2); Haras Hedood (Egy) v Dedebit (Eth) 4-0, 1-1 (agg 5-1); Ismaili (Egy) v Sofapaka (Ken) 2-0, 0-4 (agg 2-4); JS Kabylie (Alg) v Tevragh Zeina (Mta) 1-0, 2-1 (agg 3-1); Kaduna United (Nga) v Foullah Edifice (Chd) 2-0, 0-1 (agg 2-1); Maghreb Fes (Mor) v Sahel (Ngr) 0-0, 2-1 (agg 2-1); Olympique Beja (Tun) v Difaa El Jadida (Mor) 2-0, 0-3 (agg 2-3); Primeiro Agosto (Ang) v Leopards (Con) 2-0, 0-1 (agg 2-1); St Eloi Lupopo (DRC) v Nchanga Rangers (Zam) 1-0, 2-0 (agg 3-0); Sunshine Stars (Nga) v Tiko United (Cam) 2-0, 1-0 (agg 3-0); Victors (Nga) v Motema Pembe (DRC) 1-1, 0-1 (agg 1-2); Wits (SAf) v AS Adema (Mad) 1-1, 0-2 (agg 1-3).

# ASIA

## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A

Apr 5: Al Hilal (Sau) 3 Al Jazira (UAE) 1; Sepahan (Irn) 2 Al Gharafa (Qat) 0.
Apr 20: Al Gharafa 1 Sepahan 0; Al Jazira 2 Al Hilal 3.

**CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP A**

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sepahan | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 9 | 3 | 9 |
| Al Hilal | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 5 | 9 |
| Al Gharafa | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Al Jazira | 4 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 11 | 1 |

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Debut success...Lekhwiya celebrate their first Qatari title

in the penultimate round of matches to secure the title.

Coach Djamel Belmadi said: "Lekhwiya fans will see us winning more trophies. We have a very strong side, I have a very talented bunch of players."

SAUDI ARABIA

### Fourth for Al Hilal

Al Hilal won their fourth consecutive Crown Prince Cup, beating Al Wahda 5-0 in the Final.

SYRIA

### All games cancelled

Domestic football has been postponed indefinitely due to political unrest. The football federation said the move was intended to "allow national, Olympic, youth and junior teams to respond to other commitments".

**Group B**

Apr 5: Al Sadd (Qat) 1 Al Nassr (Sau) 0.
Apr 6: Esteghlal (Irn) 4 Pakhtakor (Uzb) 2.
Apr 19: Al Nassr 1 Al Sadd 1; Pakhtakor 2 Esteghlal 1.

| CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP B | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Al Sadd | 4 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 3 | 8 |
| Al Nassr | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Esteghlal | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 7 | 4 |
| Pakhtakor | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 9 | 4 |

**Group C**

Apr 5: Al Wahda (UAE) 0 Al Ittihad (Sau) 3; Bunyodkor (Uzb) 0 Persepolis (Irn) 0.
Apr 20: Al Ittihad 0 Al Wahda 0; Persepolis 1 Bunyodkor 3.

| CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP C | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Al Ittihad | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 1 | 10 |
| Bunyodkor | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 5 |
| Al Wahda | 4 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 3 |
| Persepolis | 4 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 2 |

**Group D**

Apr 6: Al Rayyan (Qat) 1 Zob Ahan (Irn) 3; Al Shabab (Sau) 4 Emirates (UAE) 1.
Apr 19: Emirates 2 Al Shabab 1; Zob Ahan 1 Al Rayyan 0.

| CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP D | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Zob Ahan | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 2 | 10 |
| Emirates | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 7 | 6 |
| Al Shabab | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 5 |
| Al Rayyan | 4 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 1 |

**Group E**

Apr 6: Jeju United (SKo) 2 Gamba Osaka (Jap) 1; Tianjin Teda (Chn) 1 Melbourne Victory (Aus) 1.
Apr 20: Gamba Osaka 3 Jeju United 1; Melbourne Victory 2 Tianjin Teda 1.

| CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP E | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tianjin | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 7 |
| Gamba | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 10 | 6 | 6 |
| Jeju | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 6 |
| Melbourne V | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 9 | 4 |

**Group F**

Apr 6: Hangzhou Greentown (Chn) 0 Al Ain (UAE) 0; Nagoya Grampus (Jap) 1 Seoul (SKo) 1.
Apr 12: Nagoya Grampus 4 Al Ain 0.
Apr 19: Al Ain 1 Hangzhou Greentown 0; Seoul 0 Nagoya Grampus 2.

| CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP F | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nagoya | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 3 | 7 |
| Seoul | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 7 |
| Hangzhou | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 4 |
| Al Ain | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 4 |

**Group G**

Apr 5: Arema (Ins) 1 Shandong Luneng (Chn) 1; Cerezo Osaka (Jap) 1 Jeonbuk Motors (SKo) 0.
Apr 20: Jeonbuk Motors 1 Cerezo Osaka 0; Shandong Luneng 5 Arema 0.

| CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP G | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jeonbuk | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 1 | 9 |
| Shandong | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 7 |
| Cerezo | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 6 |
| Arema | 4 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 12 | 1 |

**Group H**

Apr 6: Suwon Bluewings (SKo) 1 Kashima Antlers (Jap) 1; Sydney (Aus) 1 Shanghai Shenhua (Chn) 1.
Apr 13: Sydney 0 Kashima Antlers 3.
Apr 19: Kashima Antlers 1 Suwon Bluewings 1; Shanghai Shenhua 2 Sydney 3.

| CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP H | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Suwon | 4 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 6 | 2 | 6 |
| Kashima | 4 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 6 |
| Sydney | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 5 |
| Shanghai | 4 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 8 | 2 |

*Remaining matchdays: May 3/4, May 10/11*

*Top 2 in each group qualify for 1st knockout round*

## JAPAN

Apr 23: Shimizu 1 Avispa 0; Kashima 0 Yokohama 3; Omiya 0 Kashiwa 1; Ventforet 1 Vissel 1; Kawasaki 1 Vegalta 2.
Apr 24: Montedio 0 Cerezo 0; Albirex 1 Jubilo 1; Sanfrecce 4 Gamba 1; Urawa 3 Nagoya 0.

| JAPAN | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kashiwa | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 6 |
| Albirex | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 4 |
| Sanfrecce | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 4 |
| Yokohama | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 4 |
| Jubilo | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| Vegalta | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| Vissel | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| Urawa | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| Kawasaki | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Gamba | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 3 |
| Shimizu | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| Omiya | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 1 |
| Cerezo | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Ventforet | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Montedio | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| Kashima | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 1 |
| Nagoya | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 1 |
| Avispa | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 0 |

34-round season (17x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

## SOUTH KOREA

**Regular season**

Apr 2: Suwon 2 Ulsan 1; Jeju 3 Sangju 3; Gwangju 0 Pohang 1; Daegu 1 Chunnam 0; Seoul 3 Jeonbuk 1.
Apr 3: Gangwon 0 Daejeon 3; Gyeongnam 2 Incheon 1; Seongnam 2 Busan 0.
Apr 9: Gwangju 0 Sangju 0; Pohang 2 Incheon 2; Daegu 2 Gyeongnam 1.
Apr 10: Ulsan 1 Gangwon 0; Jeonbuk 0 Suwon 0; Busan 1 Seoul 1; Daejeon 0 Jeju 0; Chunnam 0 Seongnam 0.
Apr 15: Suwon 2 Gangwon 0.
Apr 16: Sangju 0 Daejeon 0; Jeju 1 Pohang 3; Jeonbuk 6 Gwangju 1; Busan 2 Daegu 2; Seoul 1 Ulsan 1.
Apr 17: Incheon 2 Seongnam 1; Gyeongnam 1 Chunnam 2.
Apr 23: Gangwon 1 Incheon 3; Pohang 2 Ulsan 0; Chunnam 0 Sangju 1.
Apr 24: Daejeon 1 Busan 3; Gwangju 1 Seoul 0; Jeju 2 Seongnam 1; Daegu 1 Jeonbuk 2; Suwon 1 Gyeongnam 2.

| SOUTH KOREA – REGULAR | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pohang | 7 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 12 | 4 | 17 |
| Jeonbuk | 7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 15 | 8 | 13 |
| Sangju | 7 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 12 | 8 | 13 |
| Suwon | 7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 9 | 6 | 13 |
| Daejeon | 7 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 9 | 5 | 12 |
| Jeju | 7 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 9 | 8 | 12 |
| Gyeongnam | 7 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 8 | 8 | 12 |
| Daegu | 7 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 10 | 9 | 11 |
| Chunnam | 7 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 10 |
| Incheon | 7 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 9 | 9 | 9 |
| Ulsan | 7 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 9 | 7 |
| Gwangju | 7 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 7 | 13 | 7 |
| Busan | 7 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 12 | 16 | 6 |
| Seoul | 7 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 10 | 6 |
| Seongnam | 7 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 7 | 9 | 5 |
| Gangwon | 7 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 1 | 12 | 0 |

30-round regular season (15x2); top 6 will enter championship play-offs

# OCEANIA

## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

**Final**

**1st leg**

*Apr 2*
**Amicale (Van) 1** (Masauvakalo 67)
**Auckland City (NZ) 2** (Exposito pen 22, Corrales 82)
**HT:** 0-1. **Att:** 7,925. **Ref:** Billion (NC)

**2nd leg**

*Apr 17*
**Auckland City 4** (Feneridis 26, Koprivcic pen 62, Exposito 72, McGeorge 82)
**Amicale 0**
**HT:** 1-0. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Hauata (Tah)
*Auckland City 6-1 on agg*

**KEY TO LEAGUE TABLES**
(C) = champions (R) = relegated

## FORTHCOMING FIXTURES

**May 31/June 1/2**
Libertadores Cup semi-finals, second leg
**June 3 and 4**
European Championship qualifiers
**June 5 to June 25**
CONCACAF Gold Cup
**June 7**
European Championship qualifiers
**June 11 to June 25**
European Under-21 Championship
**June 14/15/16**
Libertadores Cup Final first leg
**June 18 to July 10**
Under-17 World Cup
**June 19**
Argentinian clausura ends
**June 21/22/23**
Libertadores Cup Final second leg
**June 29/30**
World Cup: Asian qualifiers, first round first leg

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THE GREAT TEAMS

# Milan 1989

The Italian club were at the vanguard of a tactical revolution and went on to become the last side to win back-to-back European Cups

Dutch style...Gullit (centre) scores Milan's opening goal in the 1989 European Cup Final against Steaua

On May 24, 1989, in Barcelona's Camp Nou, a footballing revolution reached its zenith. Milan, coached by Arrigo Sacchi and backed by media mogul Silvio Berlusconi, swept aside Steaua Bucharest 4-0 to win their first European Cup for 20 years.

It was a performance described in *World Soccer*'s June 1989 issue as "the best footballing exhibition in a Champions Cup Final since Ajax beat Juventus in Belgrade in 1973".

Milan had ridden their luck in the competition's early rounds before a 5-0 thrashing of Real Madrid in their semi-final second leg sent shock waves across Europe.

Sacchi's Milan played like no previous Italian side. His role models were Brazil's 1970 World Cup winners and the Ajax of Rinus Michels. By abandoning man-marking and introducing an intensive, attack-minded, pressing game, he revolutionised Italian football.

Milan could call upon an all-Italian defence marshalled by Franco Baresi and featuring a young Paolo Maldini, but the Dutch trio of Marco Van Basten, Ruud Gullit and Frank Rijkaard supplied the attacking verve. The team went on to win the Club World Cup twice and, in May 1990, beat Benfica to retain their European title – the last club to do so.

Sacchi, who later coached the Italy national side, was succeeded by his assistant, Fabio Capello. WS

## THE COACH AND HIS TEAM

**Arrigo Sacchi**
A former shoe salesman who came to Milan's attention when his Parma side, then in Serie B, knocked them out of the Italian Cup. Sacchi had not played professionally but, as he put it: "You don't have to have been a horse to be a jockey." Later led Italy to the 1994 World Cup Final.

**The formation**
In a radical departure for Italian football, Sacchi's Milan played with a back four and no sweeper.

Baresi acted as a libero, marshalling a tight offside trap that enabled the midfield to squeeze the play. Meanwhile, when the likes of Rijkaard, Ancelotti and Colombo won the ball, the onus was on the quick counter-attack, often through Donadoni, on the right, or Gullit, who had far more licence to roam than central attacking fulcrum Van Basten.

## THE FIRST XI

**Giovanni Galli**
**Goalkeeper**
Italy international, signed from Fiorentina, who played in back-to-back European Cup Finals.

**Mauro Tassotti**
**Right-back**
Won three European Cups in his 17 years at Milan, where he is now the assistant coach.

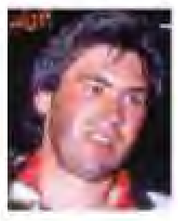
**Alessandro Costacurta**
**Centre-back**
Nicknamed "Billy", he spent his entire career with Milan, playing until the age of 41.

**Franco Baresi**
**Libero**
Rejected by Inter as a boy, the hugely influential captain played more than 20 seasons at Milan.

**Paolo Maldini**
**Left-back**
Twenty when he appeared in the 1989 Final, his Milan playing career spanned two-and-a-half decades.

**Angelo Colombo**
**Midfielder**
Played for three seasons under Sacchi before ending his Serie A career at Bari.

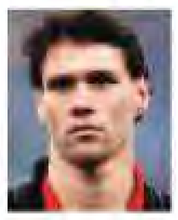
**Frank Rijkaard**
**Midfielder**
Arrived from Real Zaragoza in 1988, bringing poise and physical presence.



**Carlo Ancelotti**
**Midfielder**
Was by now approaching the end of his career, which had been spent mostly with Roma.

**Roberto Donadoni**
**Midfielder**
Joined Milan from Atalanta in 1986 and won three European Cups before moving to the US.

**Ruud Gullit**
**Forward**
Holland international signed from PSV in 1987. *World Soccer*'s Player of the Year in 1989.



**Marco Van Basten**
**Forward**
One of the game's greatest strikers, he was forced to retire in 1995 following an ankle injury.

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